JULY 2009

Special Commemorative Edition

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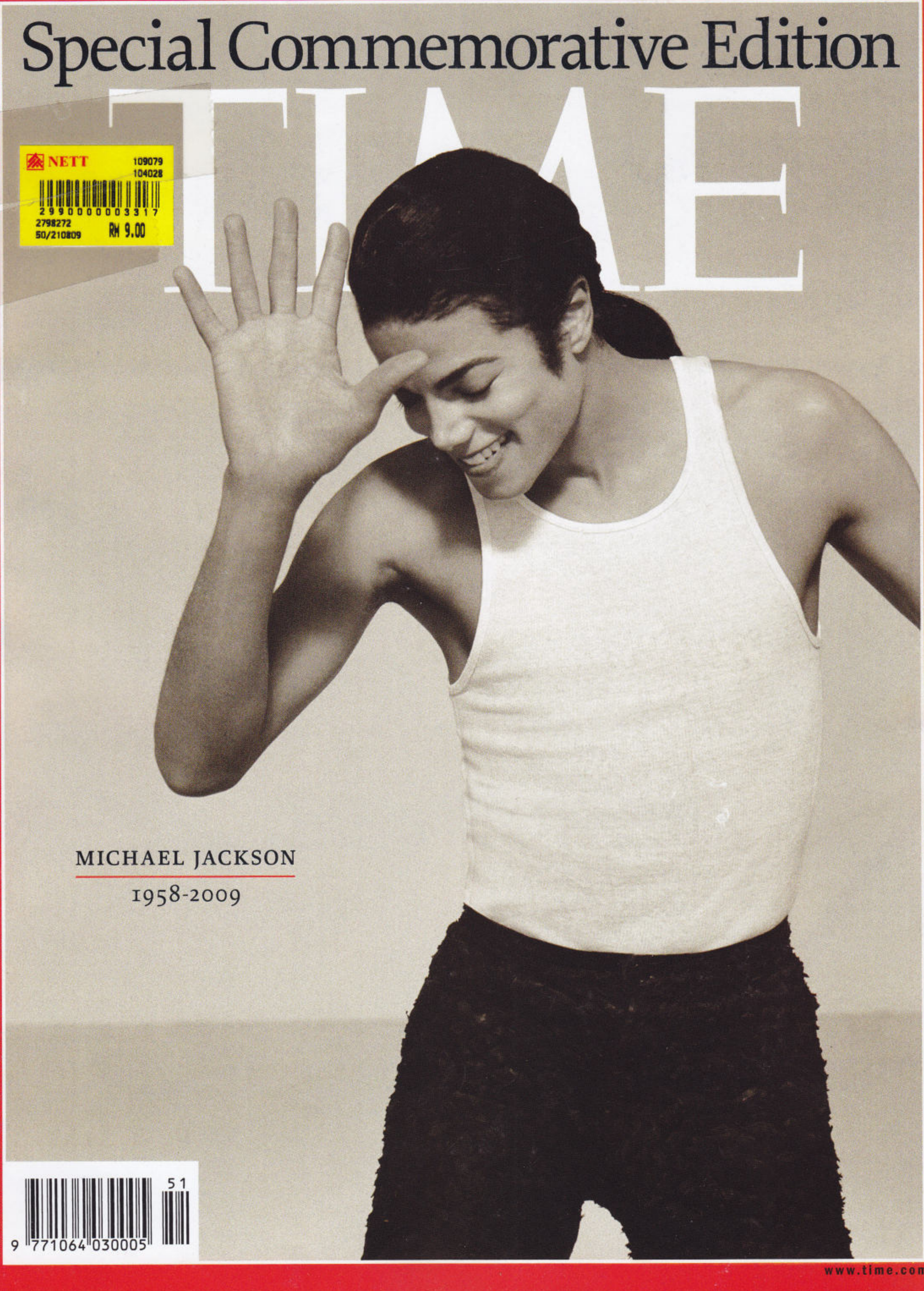

MICHAEL JACKSON

1958-2009

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The man-child *As a boy, Jackson had gifts that outstripped those of seasoned musical pros; as a man, he used his wealth and fame to chase the childhood he never had. At his peak, he was the world's greatest pop icon, and he carried to his final days the burdens that come with transcendent talent and scorching stardom*

GETTY

TIME

JULY 2009

Michael
On the news of Jackson's death, the world began to mourn the brilliant but troubling life of a global icon; the Internet sputtered as fans reached out for more information. **2**

Prodigy
Even when Jackson was a child in Gary, Ind., his stardom seemed to be an inevitability. How a legend was born—and made. **14**

Superstar
Leaving his brothers behind, Jackson went solo and became one of the most famous men in the world—a phenomenon that transcended cultures and race. **30**

Jacko
As Jackson's eccentricities deepened, the magnificent artist turned into a creepy curiosity, succumbing to scandal, controversy and financial ruin. **46**

Legacy
In his last years, Jackson's personal life overshadowed his musical achievements. But his songs speak for themselves. **60**

Farewell
A final wave from the Gloved One. **64**

On the cover: Photograph by Herb Ritts/LimeFoto.com

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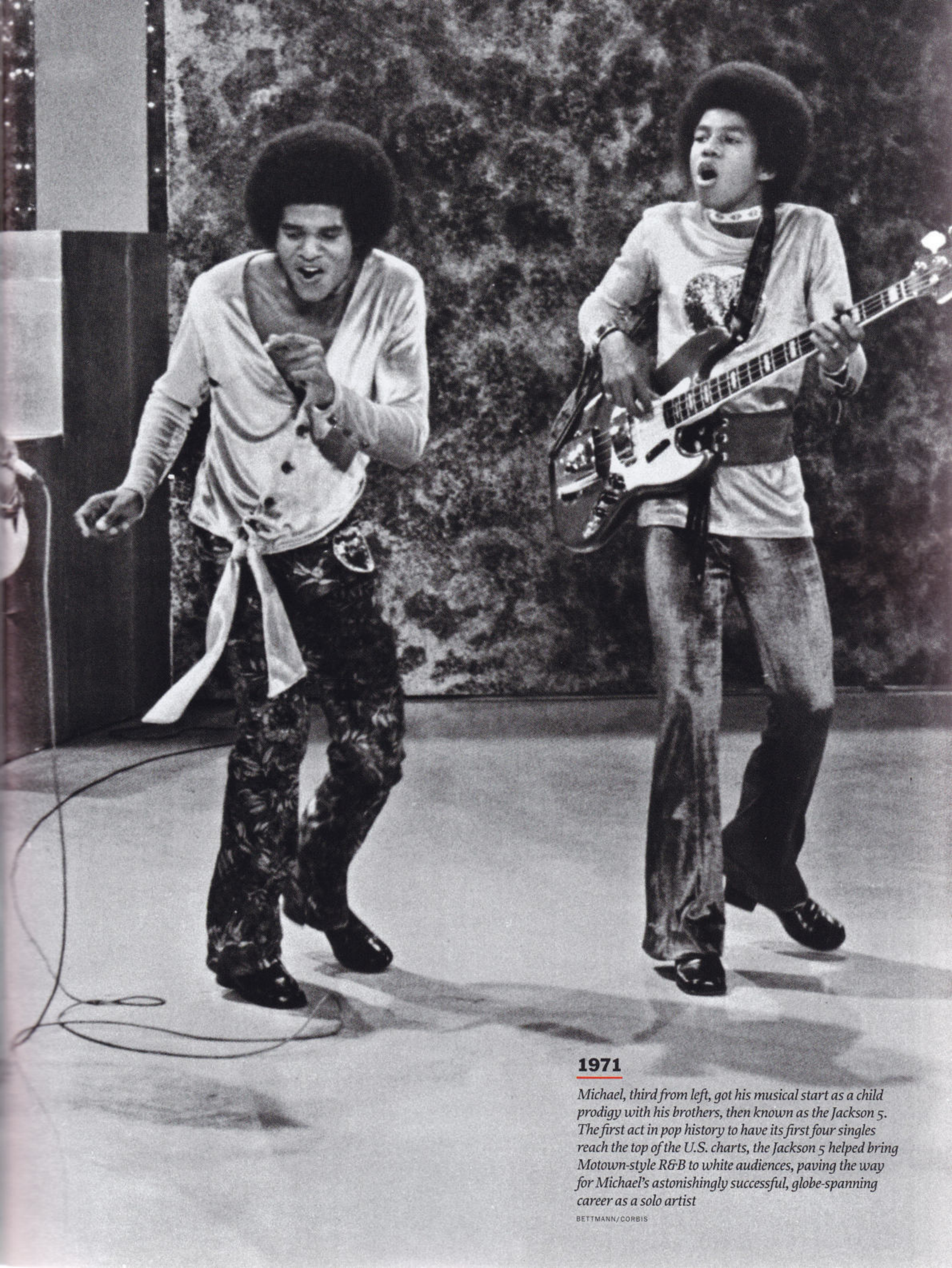
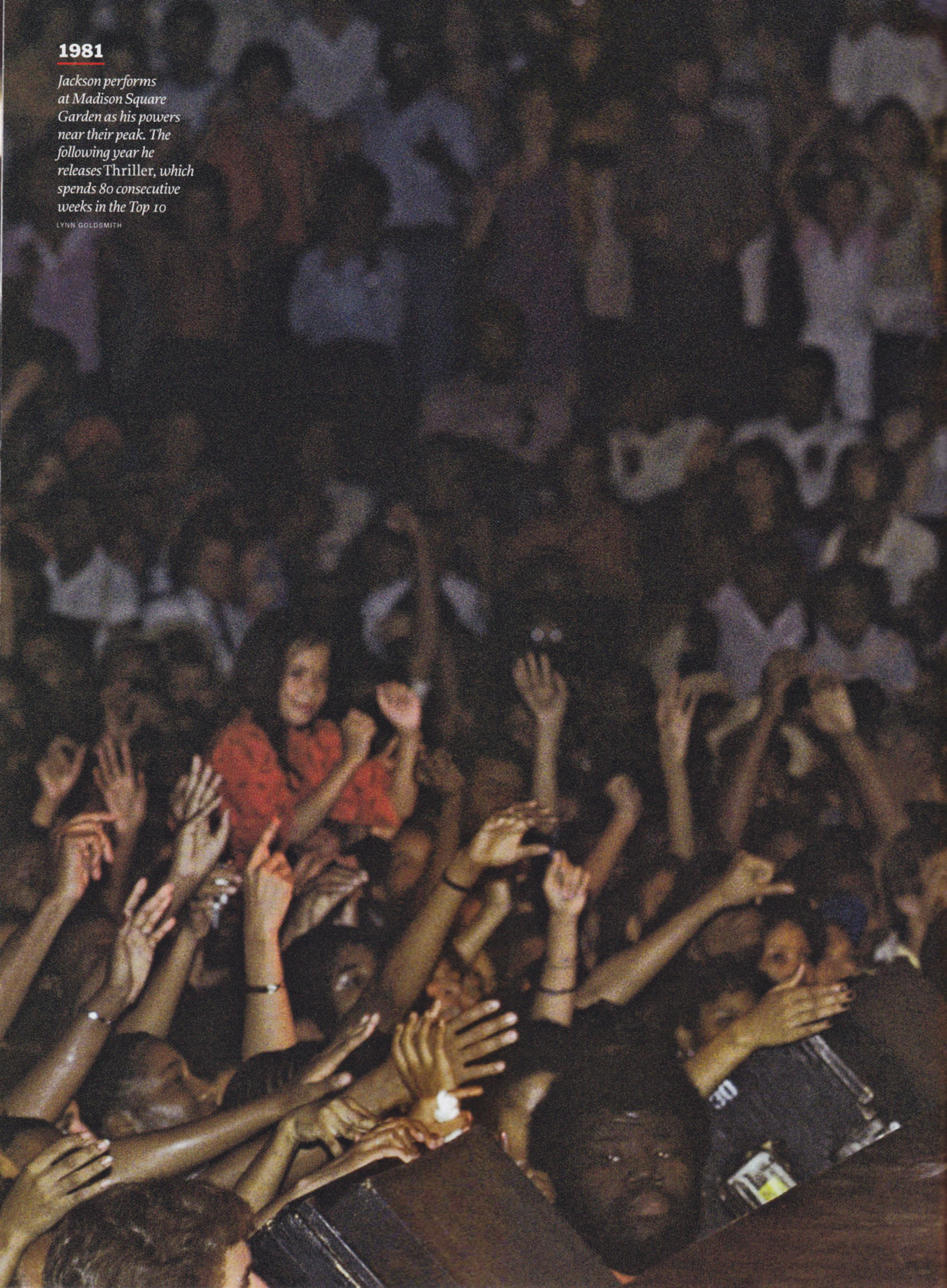


1971

Michael, third from left, got his musical start as a child prodigy with his brothers, then known as the Jackson 5. The first act in pop history to have its first four singles reach the top of the U.S. charts, the Jackson 5 helped bring Motown-style R&B to white audiences, paving the way for Michael's astonishingly successful, globe-spanning career as a solo artist

BETTMANN/CORBIS



1981

Jackson performs at Madison Square Garden as his powers near their peak. The following year he releases Thriller, *which spends 80 consecutive weeks in the Top 10*

LYNN GOLDSMITH

1993

Jackson performs the halftime show of Super Bowl XXVII. This year marks his descent from odd to ominous: he denies child-molestation charges but settles with his accuser

DAMIAN STROHMEYER—
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED/GETTY

Michael
1958-2009

Fallen star *On Hollywood's Walk of Fame and all around the world, fans made makeshift memorials*

NANCY PASTOR/POLARIS

MICHAEL JACKSON
CAN
Michael Jackson
It's Easy As 123
As Me
The Chicago Kid
Michael Jackson is For The World

With a Dramatic Pause, the World Mourned the Death of a Brilliant but Troubling Idol

By John Cloud

MICHAEL JACKSON KEPT his most stunning performance for the very end. Always able to command an audience, he knew how to bring whole arenas to fits of exultation with his moves and then silence them to the point of tears with his poetry. He was brilliant, excessive, maudlin, tacky and possibly criminal, but you could never ignore him. So it was fitting that in death, he momentarily silenced the largest arena humanity has ever known, the Internet.

News of this middle-aged man's sudden passing nearly broke the Web. Google's news section malfunctioned under the weight of "Michael Jackson" searches. The volume of Jackson-related tweets reached 5,000 per minute the day he died; Twitter was so overwhelmed that some users couldn't get into their accounts. Wikipedia buckled temporarily after hundreds of edits were made to Jackson's page. Across the Internet, more than 24,000 Jackson collectibles were offered for auction or sale. Jackson was crowned the King of Pop back before new media helped crack the monolith of radio pop into innumerable subgenres, from hip-hop and house to praise rock and adult contemporary. But the old-media monarch showed, one last time, that he still reigned: the world stopped for him for a few hours on June 25.

Not just online. Huge crowds gathered in Hollywood, in Harlem, N.Y., and near the home where he grew up in Gary, Ind. Travelers passing through the Miami airport huddled close around its TVs. Street tributes went up from Paris to Karachi, from Moscow to Mexico City. A candlelight vigil was held in Beijing. In Japan the Defense Minister eulogized him.

The consummate performer, Jackson may well have suspected that his final exit would be a spectacle. The combination of sudden death and pop-cultural universality has triggered global mourning in the past: Elvis, Diana, John Kennedy Jr. Jackson fit the pattern, almost eerily. The day after he died, one of his ex-wives, Lisa Marie Presley, wrote on her blog that Jackson once looked at her intently and said, referring to her father, "I am afraid that I am going to end up like him, the way he did." Elvis, a heavy prescription-drug user, died in August 1977 after crawling a few feet away from a toilet he had been sitting on. The coroner's report listed as Elvis' cause of death coronary arrhythmia; Jackson was rushed to the hospital after suffering cardiac arrest.

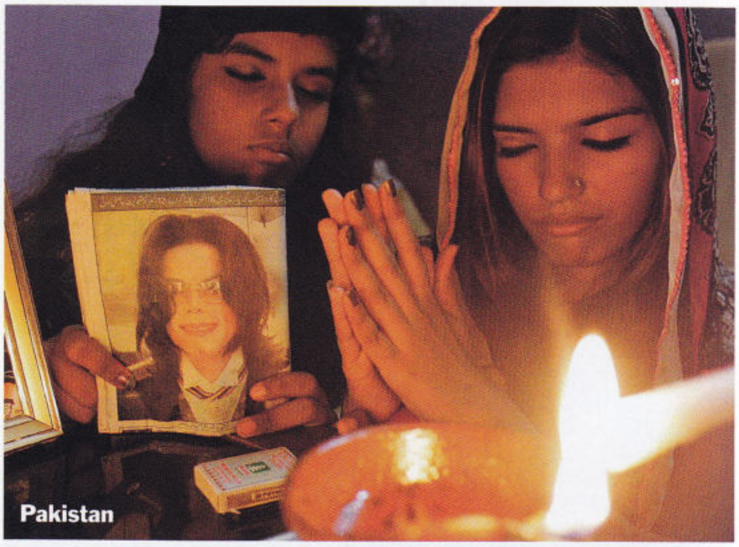
In the theater of celebrity tragedy, each play has three acts. The first is confusion. Why did it take hours for someone to find Elvis? Why wasn't Diana wearing a seat belt in a speeding car? What was J.F.K. Jr. doing flying his own plane? For Jackson, the questions revolve around his health. If he was ill, why didn't anyone do something about his fragility? What we know is that someone at the Los Angeles mansion he was renting called 911 at 12:21 p.m. that day. "He's not breathing," the man said. "He's not responding to CPR, anything." He said a physician, identified in news reports as Dr. Conrad Murray, "has been the only one here." Murray seems to have tried hard to save Jackson—his voice is muffled but frantic in the background of the emergency call—but he kept to himself in the days after Jackson died. The police impounded the car Murray used—not because he is under suspicion, authorities said, but to check for medications that might have played a role in Jackson's death.

Accounts differ on the state of Jackson's health in the days, weeks—even years—before he died. At least since his 2005 trial on child-molestation charges—charges he beat—reporters and other observers had noted his frail appearance and slow, almost pained carriage. Some suspected

PARIS: GONZALO FUENTES—REUTERS; PAKISTAN: SHAKIL ADIL—AP; NEW YORK CITY: SHAHAR AZRAN—POLARIS; LONDON: TIM IRELAND—PA/LANDOV; TORONTO: MARK BLINCH—REUTERS

MICHAEL JACKSON
BAD

Paris



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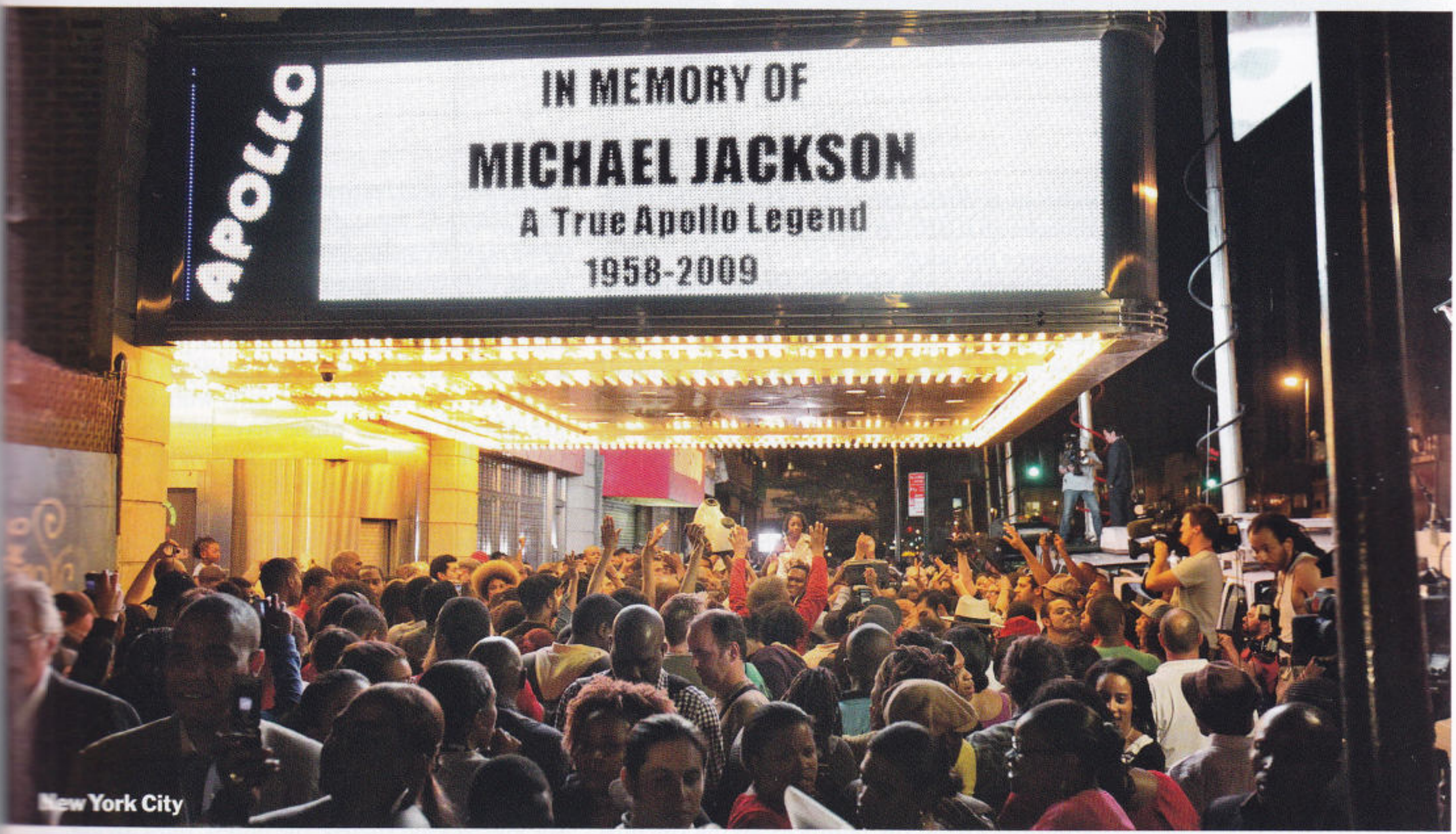
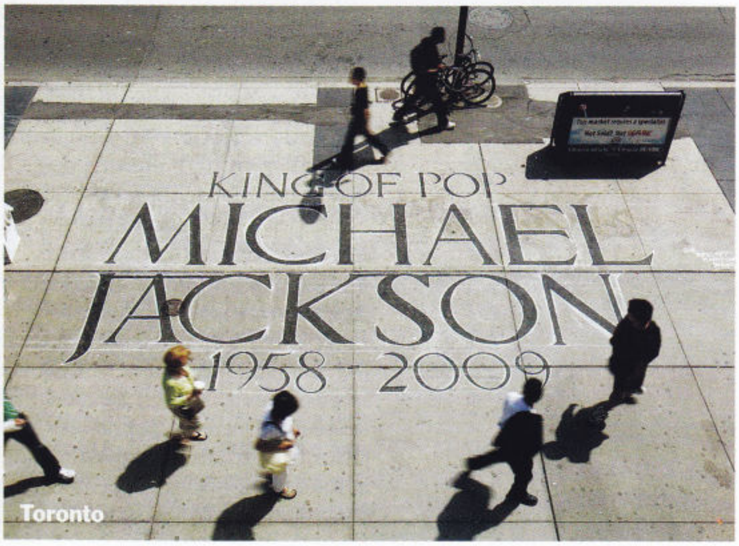

APOLLO
IN MEMORY OF
MICHAEL JACKSON
A True Apollo Legend
1958-2009

New York City

1958-2009
Gone Too Soon
Michael Jackson
GRM 09

London


KING OF POP
MICHAEL
JACKSON
1958-2009

Toronto

Mexico City

TRIBUTE TO KING OF POP

India

Web traffic spikes

Internet news sites saw a massive surge in traffic as word spread of Jackson's death. CNN.com reported some 20 million page views within the hour, a fivefold jump in visitors

Twitter atwitter

Social-networking services saw an instant flood of traffic as the news broke. Twitter temporarily disabled its search function to handle 5,000 Jackson-related tweets per minute. Facebook users updated their statuses at three times the standard rate

Texting takes off

AT&T relayed 65,000 text messages per second after Jackson's death, 60% more than normal. The AOL Instant Messenger service was knocked out for 40 minutes

substance abuse; last year a British journalist reported that Jackson had a genetic disorder that weakens the lungs.

Jackson's camp had long denied that he had any serious health problems, and as the star rehearsed for 50 sold-out London concerts that were to begin July 13, he seemed to be himself again. Grammy Awards executive producer Ken Ehrlich, who attended a June 24 rehearsal, told PEOPLE that Jackson had "great energy." He said the singer wasn't "giving it full out, but ... I thought he was in great form."

There was talk, however, that Jackson was taking painkillers to recover from the grueling pre-London sessions. For years, Jackson seems to have swallowed a variety of pills ad libitum. "I do not want to point fingers at anyone because I want to hear what the toxicology report says and the coroner says," former Jackson attorney Brian Oxman told CBS. "But the plain fact of the matter is that Michael Jackson had prescription drugs at his disposal at all times." PEOPLE.com quoted a source close to the family as saying the pills included not just painkillers but also antianxiety meds like Xanax and Valium.

Even more troubling, a Jackson family member told TMZ.com that Michael had been receiving daily injections of Demerol, an addictive painkiller. In high enough doses, Demerol can slow respiration to the point of suffocation, which can deprive the heart of oxygen and lead to sudden death, according to Dr. Douglas Zipes, a past president of the American College of Cardiology. Jackson was fascinated with Demerol. On his 1997 track "Morphine"—an unusually discordant Jackson song—he sings, "Close your eyes and drift away Demerol ... Today he's taking twice as much Demerol." Deepak Chopra told CNN the day after Jackson died that one night when the singer stayed at his house, he asked if Chopra had any of the drug. Chopra told TIME that Jackson was "totally enabled by these Hollywood Mafia drug-dealer doctors who have medical licenses and should be brought to justice ... Instead of managing his stress, they would give him drugs."

And yet the cause of death could be something much more straightforward. After all, Jackson was a man who, as the singer Patti Austin told CNN, rarely ate right and didn't usually work out—he just worked. He may simply have had a heart attack. "When you live like a hummingbird," Austin said, "you don't have a long life span."

THE SECOND ACT OF A CELEBRITY TRAGEDY IS cleaner, simpler than the confusing first act: everyone suddenly begins to heap encomiums on the dead. After Diana was killed in a car crash in 1997, strangers hugged one another in the streets of London. Celebrities around the globe who had known Diana sent heartbroken tributes.

And so it was with Jackson. Brooke Shields called him an "extraordinary friend, artist and contributor to the world." Elizabeth Taylor said she and Jackson shared "the purest, most giving love I've ever known." On MTV, music writer Kurt Loder said Jackson's genius reached beyond singing and dancing. Jackson, he said, had been able to negotiate complex business deals with Sony in his spare time. In the days after Jackson's death, music critics stumbled over one another to praise him for the way he blended black music and white as well as for the rigor of his stage performances.

Jackson longed to please people and worked hard at it all his life: he tried to satisfy his demanding and abusive father, his insatiable fans, his own bottomless ambitions. All those long rehearsals for his London comeback were typical; after all, this was a man who literally burned in service to pop culture—his hair famously caught fire as he filmed a Pepsi commercial in 1984—and who routinely performed through injuries. Yet for so public a figure, Jackson was socially awkward.

MJ
I LOVE YOU

China

JACKSON 5 BLVD

Detroit

inept at small talk and terrified when the distant audience became an adoring mob. Donald Trump told TIME that Jackson used to drop to his knees to crawl away from maniacal fans after concerts. "I guess the stress, the anticipation and the passion he was emitting, wanting to do this comeback so badly, maybe that got to him," Jackson's friend Uri Geller, an illusionist, told the Press Association.

The second act reached its apogee when the Rev. Al Sharpton appeared in front of New York City's Apollo Theater, where Jackson had performed as a child and where traffic slowed to a crawl the day he died, to place him in a highly flattering historical context: "Way before Tiger Woods, way before Oprah Winfrey, way before Barack Obama, Michael did with music what they later did in sports and in politics and in television."

Probably true. Yet as we all witnessed while Jackson's career played out, the star was never comfortable in his own skin. Even as Sharpton spoke, Facebook and other sites were host to raucous debates about whether the instant hagiography wasn't minimizing too many troubling details. Jackson had lived as a man frozen in puberty—his voice a weird falsetto, his hand continually grabbing his crotch, his clothes sometimes stitched with faux military regalia of the sort that should interest only a boy. For a while, a constant companion was a chimp called Bubbles. When he died, Jackson was heavily in debt, a man beset by financial and legal predicaments caused largely by his inability to control his enthusiasms for expensive baubles and inviting little boys to his bedroom. He paid a reported $20 million to settle one case brought by an alleged sexual-abuse victim.

THE THIRD AND FINAL ACT TAKES LONGER: WE set emotion aside and let investigators do their work. The thousands of flowers left outside the Manhattan apartment building where John Kennedy Jr. resided had long withered when the final reports on his plane crash were issued. So it will be with Jackson: now we wait for the blank parts of the day he died to be filled in.

By his death, Jackson had—like many wealthy people—accumulated "friends" who turned out to be knaves or useless hangers-on. (On her blog, Presley called them "the awful vampires and leeches he would always manage to magnetize.") One associate has been portrayed in the press as a physician, but it's unclear whether he has a medical license. Jackson was often sued by employees who may have been looking for a quick buck. His death may well be accidental, but investigators and journalists will spend months determining whether it could have been prevented if those around him weren't so often using him as an ATM.

Although his family has other issues to attend to—custody of Jackson's three kids as well as the ruins of his empire—it will doubtless ensure a thorough inquiry. The L.A. authorities autopsied the body June 26, but the coroner won't release a final report for weeks. In the meantime, those accused in the media of abetting Jackson's decline will surely highlight the star's appetites. After all, they might point out, this is a guy who settled in 2007 with a Beverly Hills pharmacy that claimed he owed an astonishing $100,000 for prescriptions it had filled.

On the day he died, many who knew Jackson described him as "gentle," which seemed to be a kind of code, an explanation, an excuse. In fact, he seems more like a character in a show he had no control over, a boy turned into a man too soon and a man who tried to become a boy all over again. His greatest performance may have occurred June 25, when sudden death ensured that we will always wonder who he really was. —REPORTED BY BARBARA KIVIAT, TIM MORRISON, ALICE PARK AND ANDREA SACHS/NEW YORK AND ALISON STATEMAN/LOS ANGELES ■

To the top of the charts

Amazon's massive warehouses ran out of Jackson CDs minutes after his death was reported, as sales hit 700 times the previous day's volume. His music accounted for all 10 best-selling albums on Amazon the next day

Clamor for merchandise

The number of Jackson items sold on the online-auction site eBay doubled following his death, with the average price jumping by nearly a third

MTV Jackson marathon

The music network switched to all-Jackson programming following news of his hospitalization, running more than 24 straight hours of videos, tributes and news updates

Prodigy

1958-1977

The Kid *As the breakout star of the Jackson 5, Michael dazzled audiences with his showstopping talent*

STEVE SCHAPIRO—CORBIS

A Little Boy with Outsize Gifts Takes Charge of His Family's Band, Then Leaves It Far Behind

By David Von Drehle

THE STORY STARTS WITH TALENT. Not the sort of talent that wins the lead in the school musical, or even the sort that wins *American Idol.* This is vanishing-point talent, so far to the right of the bell curve that it needs its own sheet of graph paper. It's lonely way out there—but that part of the story comes later.

So here's Don Cornelius, creator of *Soul Train,* taking us back to the beginning. It's the mid-1960s. Cornelius is a Chicago disc jockey and announcer at WVON, a powerhouse of the black-music scene. And he finds himself at a show where five brothers from a Gary, Ind., family are coming onstage to perform some predictable covers of songs from established groups like the Temptations. Family acts have a checkered history, talentwise, so Cornelius is ready to be underwhelmed.

And then this kid, maybe a second-grader, spins his way out of the pack of older boys and opens his mouth to sing. And the sheer weight of Michael Jackson's talent lands as unexpectedly as a cartoon safe dropping from a desert sky. "He's only 4 ft. tall," Cornelius recalls, "and you're looking at a small person who can do anything he wanted to do onstage—with his feet or his voice. To get to the level of people who can do that, you're talking about James Brown as a performer. You're talking about Aretha Franklin as a singer. Michael was like that as a kid. He did it all, within the framework of one package. Nobody else did that."

Michael Jackson wasn't one of those child stars who was driven to success by an overbearing parent, though his father Joseph Jackson was indeed overbearing to the point of violence. He wasn't a child star who briefly captured the passing fancy of *Tiger Beat* with a mixture of tenor and bangs. Even his fluffiest boyhood smash, "ABC," was far more sophisticated than the abundant bubblegum sugaring the Top 40 airwaves circa 1970. He wasn't boosted to stardom by the Jackson 5; the group just tried to hang on to his rocket. Jackson was a force of nature, an inevitability. All the rest is biography, what-ifs and consequences.

He was born on Aug. 29, 1958. His mother Katherine was a dedicated Jehovah's Witness with a sweet singing voice who endeavored to protect her large family from the widespread sin of the surrounding city. His father was a crane operator and decent guitar player. Together the parents fixed on the idea of a family singing group, which might keep the boys off the streets and—just maybe—give the family a ticket out of their dead end. As first conceived, the group didn't even include Michael. He was too young. But when he was about 3 years old, he started singing the stuff he heard his brothers rehearsing. Talent announced itself. From then on, he was the acknowledged star.

Joe Jackson drove his sons relentlessly. He ridiculed their shortcomings and punished them for their mistakes. He supervised daily practice sessions with a whip in his hand; he beat the kids with fists, hangers, a razor strop. None of it was necessary to motivate Michael, for the boy was a sponge when it came to developing his craft. He studied the singing of Jackie Wilson, Diana Ross, Sam Cooke, Stevie Wonder. At an age when most kids are learning the basics of do-re-mi, he was self-administering an advance course in the Godfather of Soul. "I think James Brown is a genius, you know. When he was with the Famous Flames—unbelievable," Jackson once told Oprah Winfrey. "I used to watch him on the television, and I used to get angry at the cameraman because whenever he would really start to dance, they would be on a closeup, so I couldn't see his feet. I'd shout, 'Show him! Show him!' so I could watch and learn."

Joe booked his boys into Gary's dives and strip joints, where they earned token fees plus whatever the audience tossed onto the stage. Six-year-old Michael crawled along the floor scooping coins into his pockets until his pants sagged. The next step was the so-called chitlin' circuit of black nightclubs, and from there, the Jackson brothers made it to Harlem's Apollo Theater, where the group won an amateur-night competition in 1967. That same year, the Jacksons opened for Gladys Knight and the Pips, who were part of Berry Gordy's astonishing catalog of artists at Motown Records. Knight was so struck by the adorable prodigy that she urged the Motown boss to take a look.

Joe and Katherine sensed time was running short. Like countless stage parents before them, they understood that the moment to launch a child star is well before the hormones hit. As a family friend once said, "Katherine knew the only way out of Gary was through Michael ... One day she turned to me and said, 'Michael is cute now, but he won't stay that way forever. Then what do we do? They've got to get a record contract now.'"

This urgency wasn't lost on Michael, who had a grown man's sense of commerce behind his big brown eyes and cherub cheeks. Impatient, Joe took his boys to record a single at tiny Steeltown Records in Gary. Ben Brown, the label's president, recalled that the youngster was unhappy at the subsequent photo session. "Michael said the setup looked like a family portrait," Brown once told an interviewer. "He said, 'Isn't this supposed to be business?' So he set up the group the way he thought it should be and took his pose at the front, and that's the picture we used. He had some savvy. He knew even from then."

Gordy finally agreed to see the Jacksons the following year, 1968. The Motown mogul listened with a poker face to an entire set. Inside, Gordy later said, he was thinking that Michael's superhuman dancing was too mature for his piping voice, and he would need a brand of music written just for him. "We could not believe this old man in this young kid's body," said Gordy. When the music stopped, he handed Joe a contract, the brothers bounced with joy, then stepped onto Motown's conveyor belt to stardom. And what was that like? Wall-to-wall work. The house songwriters started cranking out "soul-bubblegum," as Gordy called it. The arrangers and producers and sidemen pushed the boys in search of a Jackson 5 sound. There were endless hours with the Motown fashion crew, trying on wild clothes, and more hours with the hair stylists, and still more hours with Gordy's etiquette teachers. Inside the studio, there was a name for the group handling the Jacksons: "the Corporation."

After a year in the Corporation's factory, the Jackson 5 were a finished product, released to the public with a single called "I Want You Back." The brothers traded snippets over a percolating bass and percussion line, but it was Michael's song; he owned it from the moment he soared thrillingly on a glissando to plead "Ooooh, baby, give me one more chance." And with that, he was forever stamped on the world's sound track. The song hit No. 1 in January 1970. Their next recording, "ABC," reached No. 1 in April—bumping "Let It Be," by a group called the Beatles. "The Love You Save" topped the charts in June, followed by "I'll Be There" in October. Of all the great Motown acts, the Jackson 5 were the first to chart four No. 1 hits in a single year. Sometimes lost in the dazzle of their debut is the fact that with "I'll Be There," Michael Jackson gave birth to a classic ballad at the age of 12. Not even Judy Garland managed that.

The price of success, as it was for Garland and other prodigies, was a lost childhood. "There was a park across the street from the Motown studio, and I can remember looking at those kids playing games," Jackson wrote in his memoir, *Moon Walk*. "I'd just stare at them in wonder—I couldn't imagine such freedom, such a carefree life—and I wish more than anything I had that kind of freedom, that I could walk away and be just like them."

He told Winfrey that he was a "lonely, sad"

FAVORITE SONGS

Lenny Kravitz
Singer-songwriter

LOOKIN' THROUGH THE WINDOWS

This song is complex, the chord changes are beautiful, the range in which Michael sings on that track is phenomenal

General Colin Powell
Former Secretary of State

ABC

The spirited lyrics, the dancing and the joy of watching these five handsome, clean-cut youngsters pouring their hearts out moved me then and moves me now. It was the early '70s, a time of war, a time of political turmoil, a time of the counterculture and domestic unrest. They made us smile with their freshness and their cute 'fros. We tapped our feet, felt good watching them, and our cares left for a few minutes

Alicia Keys
Musician

I CAN'T HELP IT

I just love the bass line and chords of that song; it just puts you in an immediate zone—that yearning and that desire that's in his voice. I believe Stevie Wonder wrote that song, and it's just a beautiful culmination of the emotion of music

Spike Lee
Director-producer

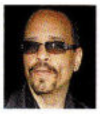
I'LL BE THERE

I loved him as a solo artist—I had a big Afro like he did, and I hoped that the girls would like me the way they liked him—but I have a special place in my heart for the stuff he did with the Jackson 5

Sheryl Crow
Singer-songwriter

I'LL BE THERE

His sweet young voice had the understanding that made you believe he knew what he was singing about



Ice-T
Rapper

I WANT YOU BACK

I'm pretty much exactly the same age as Michael Jackson, so I was a little kid standing in front of the TV mimicking him and my parents would sit there and watch me try to match him. That was one of the first records where I learned every word to the song and I could sing it and dance with the Jackson 5 in front of the TV. It's something that's really part of my childhood

child, "having to face popularity and all that. There were times when I had great times with my brothers, pillow fights and things, but I ... used to always cry from loneliness."

Oprah: "Beginning at what age?"

Michael: "Oh, very little, 8, 9."

And even as the Jackson 5 were blazing to glory, anyone with eyes to see could predict that the group wouldn't last long. There was such an imbalance of talents—four mortals and this freakishly powerful fifth. Typical of Motown acts, the Jacksons were pressed into an ensemble, from their choreography to their lyrical trade-offs to their matched outfits. But whenever young Michael eased out of the spotlight and into formation alongside his brothers, the whole act sagged. It was like hitching a Derby winner to a farm wagon, and you could see him trying to hold himself back until, after a few bars, sanity prevailed and he would burst again to the front where he belonged.

Because he was so young, and because he made performing look so easy, and perhaps because he was a young black man in a country whose President (as we recently learned from newly released Nixon tapes) believed abortion was necessary to prevent blacks and whites from having children together, a lot of people figured Michael Jackson just happened, a force as inexplicable as music itself. Berry Gordy, a most calculating man, recognized, however, that there was nothing accidental about Jackson. "Michael's always been different," Gordy once said. "He's more intense than anybody. He's made a science out of this."

And so, even as the Jackson 5 spun off a Saturday-morning cartoon and cranked out more hits, the group's star steered himself into a solo career. His first No. 1 hit, tellingly, was a slightly creepy yet nakedly beautiful love song about a lonely boy and his best friend, a rat named Ben. This from a boy who was already filling his family's Encino, Calif., estate with pets—a boa constrictor, peacocks, parrots.

There was one challenge that neither talent nor calculation could overcome. When puberty hit, his voice dropped, he gained weight and his face broke out. "I had pimples so badly it used to make me so shy. I used not to look at myself. I'd hide my face in the dark, I wouldn't want to look in the mirror, and my father teased me and I just hated it and I cried every day," Jackson told Winfrey. He imagined he was fat and ugly. He adopted a vegetarian diet that his older brother Jermaine touted as an acne cure. It was a short step from there to his first visit to a plastic surgeon. Adolescence—the loss of that cute kid he had been, the unmoored search for a suitable way to be an adult—"messed up my whole personality," he acknowledged.

But while Jackson wrestled with an emotional transition common to child stars, he retained his artistic confidence. In 1974, as disco threatened to bury sweet-voiced boys in the music business, the Jacksons appeared on *Soul Train* to introduce their new single, "Dancing Machine." It was an altogether funkier Michael Jackson doing the singing. Midsong, his face went blank as he popped through a jaw-dropping dance move called the robot. It was his own invention, the product of long hours of cunning physical engineering, nothing borrowed from James Brown. The song was a smash; the robot, a sensation. And Michael Jackson was done being a prodigy and on to something bigger.

Musician Lenny Kravitz was a child when he saw the Jackson 5 at Madison Square Garden. "It was the first concert I'd ever seen, and they were wearing these knicker pants with boots that came up to the knees. So I would put galoshes on and dance around the living room and pretend that I was Michael Jackson," he recalls.

"If he had just done what he did as a child, he would still be the genius that he is considered today," Kravitz sums up. "Because it is not natural for a child to sing that way, to sing with that amount of depth, with that amount of emotion, with that amount of interpretation, the pitch, the purity and the feeling. The only kind of musician I can compare that to is Mozart."

But while we call these "gifts," there is a point at which the gift is just too large, talents impose themselves as burdens and barriers, and distinction shades irretrievably into alienation. Which feels to a sobbing boy like an eternity of loneliness. ■

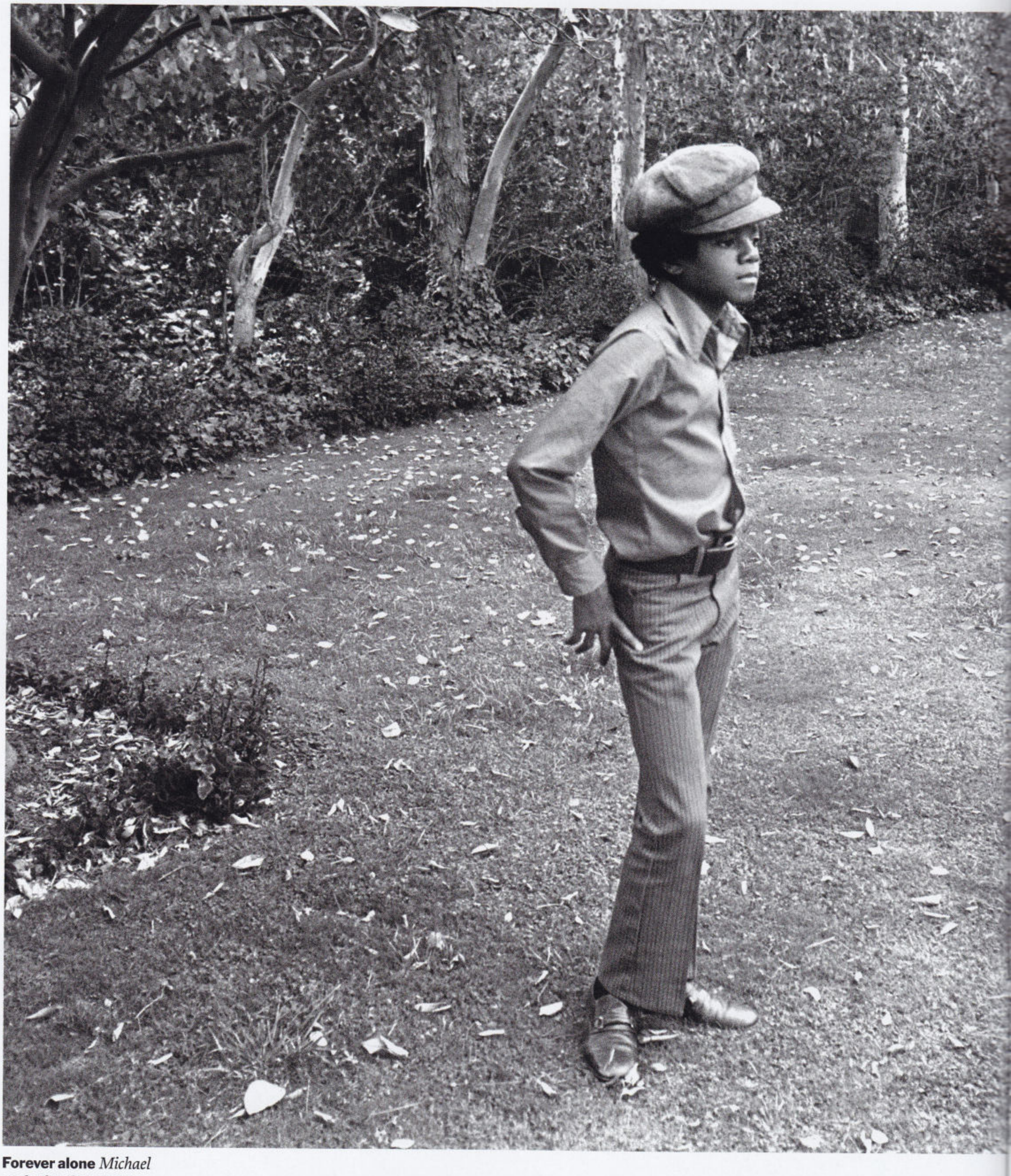
THIS PAGE: CHRISTIAN ALMINANA—GETTY; KEVIN MAZUR—WIREIMAGE; JASON DECROW—AP; OPPOSITE PAGE: AP

Quick study *Jackson (at age 13) watched James Brown to improve his live performances*

THIS PAGE: CHRISTIAN ALMINANA—GETTY; KEVIN MAZUR—WIREIMAGE; JASON DECROW—AP; OPPOSITE PAGE: AP

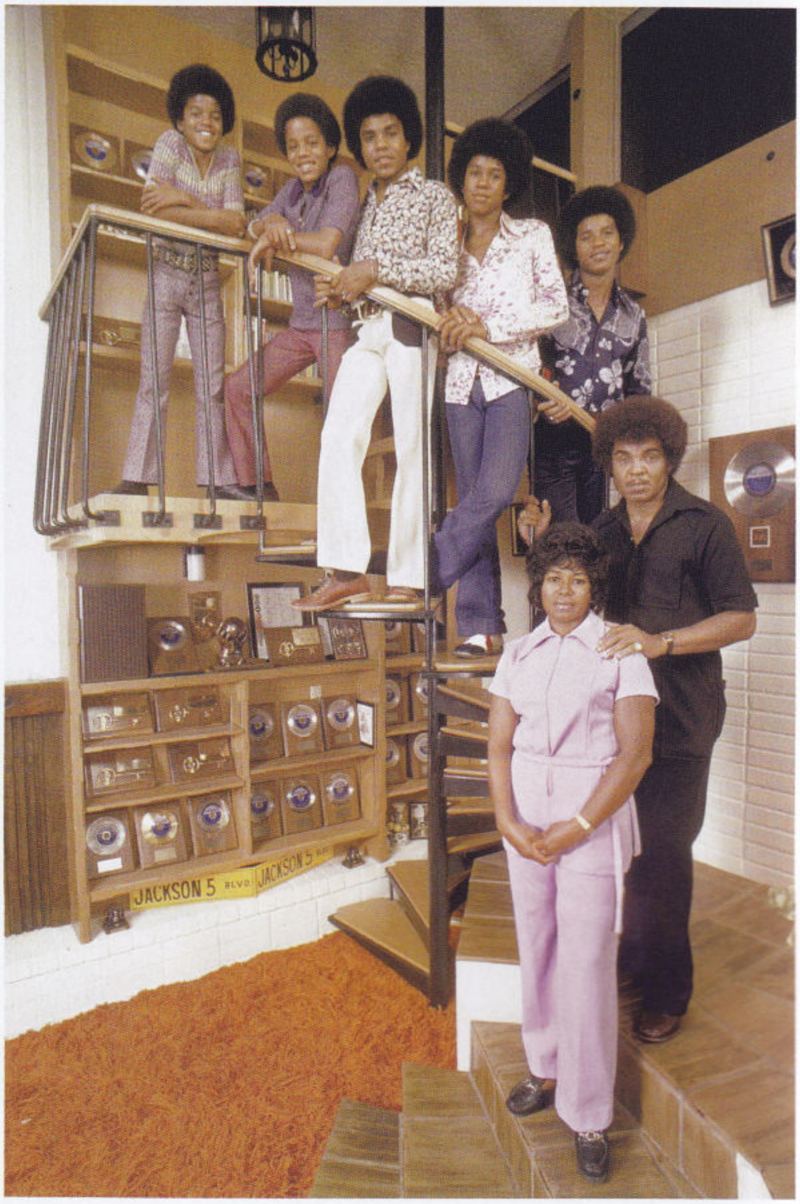
Rising stars *After inking a deal with Motown Records, the Jacksons notched four successive No. 1 singles in 1970*

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY



Forever alone *Michael at the family home in Encino, Calif.; "I ... used to always cry from loneliness," he said*

NEAL PRESTON

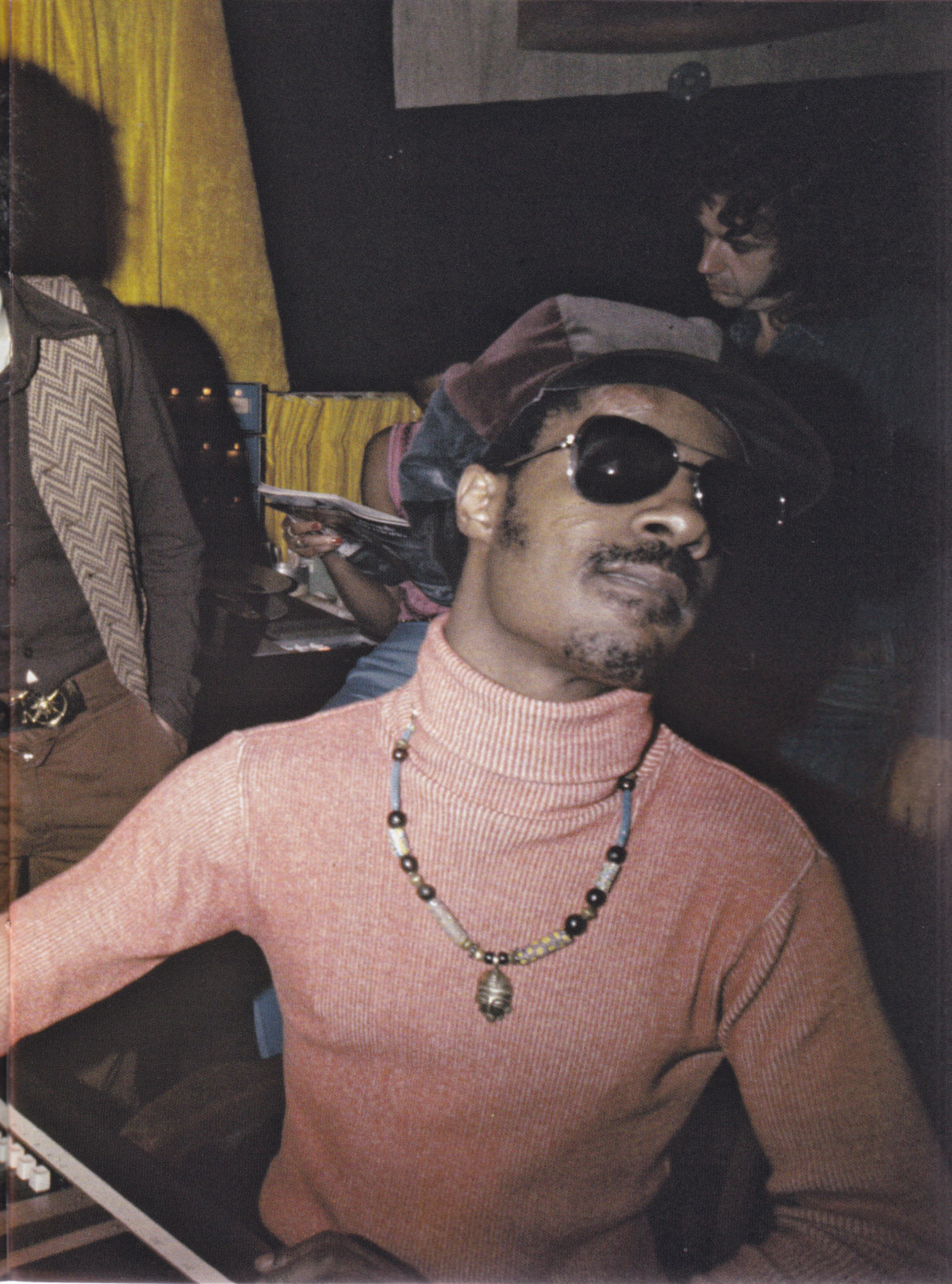

JACKSON 5 BLVD
JACKSON 5

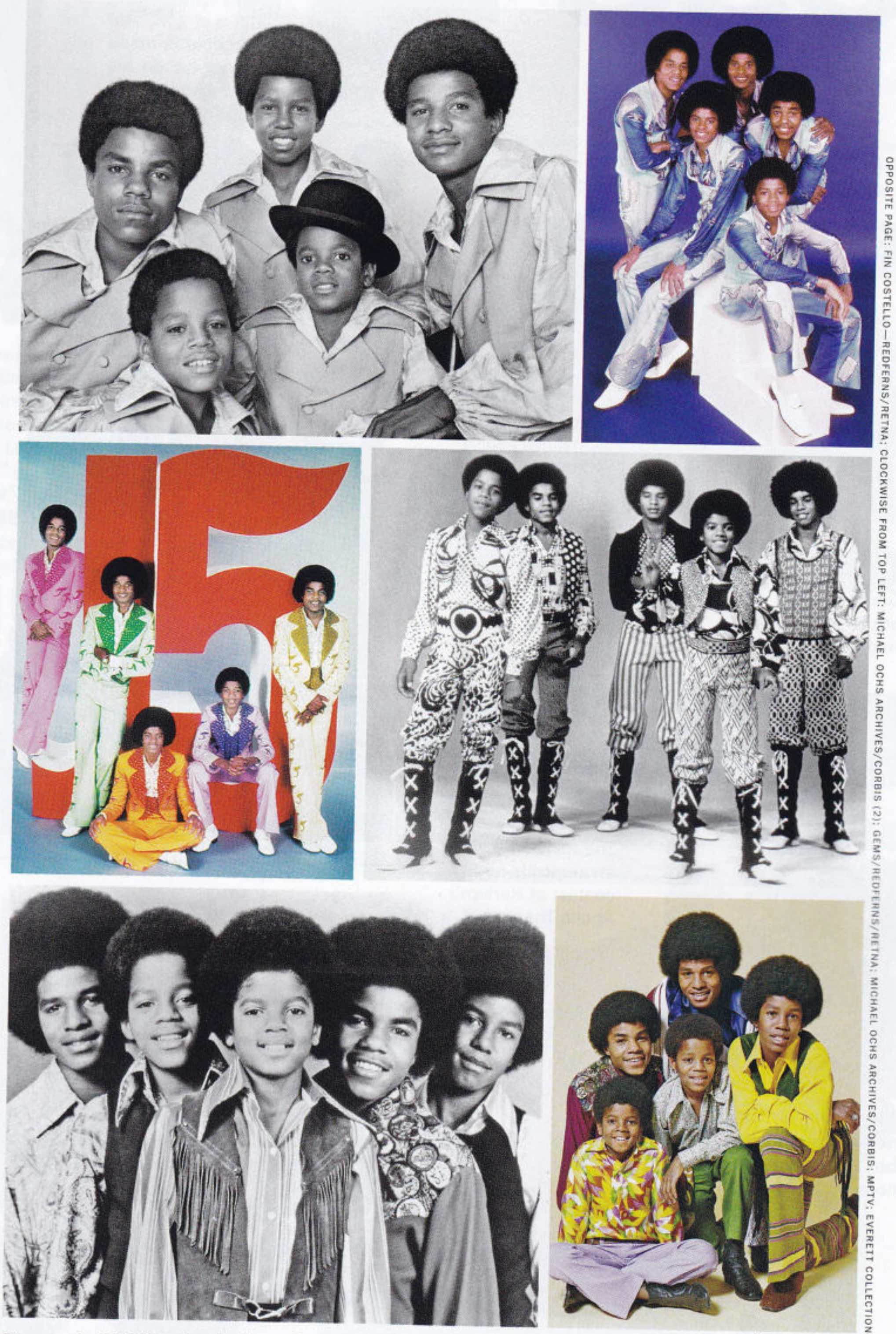
JOHN OLSON—TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY

Great expectations
Parents Katherine and Joseph Jackson at home with their sons, around 1970

Wonder boy *Jackson spent his childhood years at Motown Records, learning from stars such as Stevie Wonder*

TODD GRAY





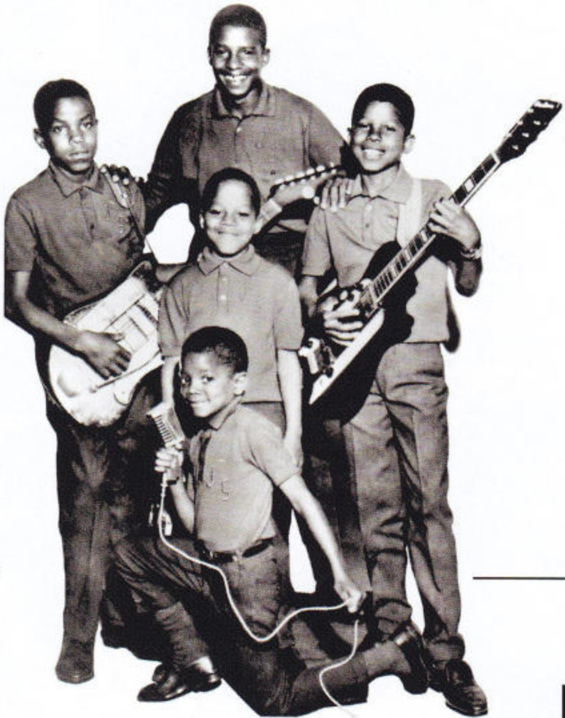
Easy as 1, 2, 3 *Starting in the seedy nightspots of their hometown of Gary, Ind., the Jackson 5 rocketed to fame on the strength of Michael's prodigious talent. After a yearlong vocal and visual makeover by Motown boss Berry Gordy—he favored Day-Glo—the Jacksons churned out chart-topping, instantly catchy pop-soul at an unprecedented rate*

OPPOSITE PAGE: FIN COSTELLO—REDFERNS/RETNA; CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/CORBIS (2); GEMS/REDFERNS/RETNA; MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/CORBIS; MPTV; EVERETT COLLECTION

1958-1977

WIS.
MICH.
Chicago
Gary
ILL.
IND.

Michael Jackson is born Aug. 29, 1958, in Gary, Ind., the **seventh** of nine children



The **Jackson 5,** composed of Michael *(front),* Marlon, Jackie, Tito and Jermaine. Michael, the most talented of the group, takes over lead-singing duties by age 8

The group releases its first single, "Big Boy," with Steeltown, a small Indiana record label

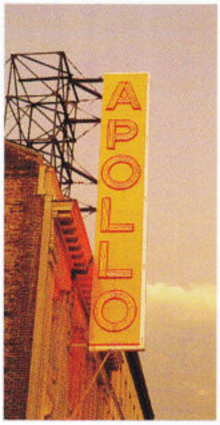
1958 1959 1960 1961 1962 1963 1964 1965

1966

1967

Patriarch Joe Jackson masterminds **one of America's first hit boy bands** out of their modest home in Gary

The Jackson 5 **win an amateur-night** contest at Harlem's Apollo Theater



The Jackson clan follows Motown from the Midwest to sunny, gaudy California

By Gilbert Cruz. Reported by Andrea Dorfman and Mengly Taing

AP (2); BETTMANN/CORBIS (2); CORBIS (2); EVERETT; GETTY (8); OUTLINE/CORBIS; POST-TRIBUNE; RETNA; SPLASHNEWS; TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY

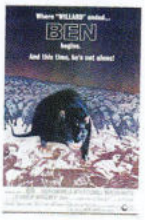
The Jackson 5 make their first appearance on ***The Ed Sullivan Show***

After relocating to California, the band is formally introduced with a **performance at the Daisy,** a Beverly Hills nightclub, and an opening gig for the Supremes several days later

Following "I Want You Back," the group's **next three singles**—"ABC," "The Love You Save" and "I'll Be There"—**also top the Billboard charts,** an unprecedented feat

"Got to Be There," Michael's **first solo single,** reaches No. 4 on the charts. The similarly titled album is released the following year

GOT TO BE THERE
Album peaks at No. 14



With **"Ben,"** the title song to a film about a telepathic pet rat, 14-year-old Michael notches his **first No. 1 solo hit**

The group's **short-lived TV show,** *The Jacksons,* debuts on CBS. By this time, Jermaine has been replaced by youngest brother Randy *(below, far left)*

1968
1969
1970
1971
1972
1973
1974
1975
1976
1977

The Jackson 5 successfully **audition for Motown Records.** They go on to record more than half a dozen studio albums for Berry Gordy's soul label

MOTOWN®

DIANA ROSS PRESENTS THE JACKSON 5
Album peaks at No. 5

The Jackson 5 release their debut album. The single "I Want You Back," sung by a now 11-year-old Michael, rockets to No. 1

The brothers leave Motown for CBS Records and are forced to change their name to, simply, **the Jacksons**

Superstar

1978-1989

Liquid limbs *Jackson's solo career was marked as much by his signature dance moves as by his singing and style*

HARRISON FUNK—ZUMA

No Celebrity Supernova Burned Brighter Than Michael Jackson At the Peak of His Career

By Richard Corliss

MICHAEL JACKSON'S GLORIOUS decade began with a forgotten failure. Michael hadn't yet turned 20 when he got his first co-starring role in a big movie: *The Wiz*, a black version of *The Wizard of Oz* that had been a hit on Broadway. Jackson was cast as the Scarecrow, and he studied hard for the role, his impossible flexibility and cheerful demeanor making him an ideal companion to Diana Ross's Dorothy. But nothing in the project jelled. *The Wiz* was an expensive flop, with one important asterisk: Jackson struck up a friendship with the film's musical supervisor, Quincy Jones.

For nearly a quarter-century, Jones had been helping singers sound their best: Ray Charles, Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald. *The Wiz* was just a bump in Jones' yellow brick road, or perhaps a fortunate detour. Jackson, already ensconced at Epic Records, asked Jones to produce his next album. It would be a great career move for both men. *Off the Wall*, their first collaboration and Jackson's fifth studio album, was the one that shaped MJ's style, spawned some hits and sped him toward superstardom.

The new assurance was evident from the album's first single, "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough." With a disco beat indebted to the Bee Gees' *Saturday Night Fever* and a lyric that was suggestive enough to reportedly incur the disapproval of Michael's mother Katherine, the song went to No. 1 on the U.S. charts. Jackson's voice hadn't changed, but he amped up the level of urgency and authority and tried out the first of the grunts and squeals that would become a vocal trademark. That was surely thanks to Jones; you can almost hear him pushing Jackson to stand tall and sing what he feels, even if words can't possibly express it. "Everybody sang high in Motown, even Stevie [Wonder]," says Jones. "I wanted to feel the full range of his voice, and I wanted him to deal with more mature kinds of themes. That's why 'She's out of My Life,' a song that Tommy Baylor wrote about the very bad ending of a marriage, that I was saving for Sinatra, I did with Michael. Because Michael I don't think had ever dealt with an emotion that deep in just a regular normal romance. And he cried on every take. Every take we did, he cried. I left the tears on the record because it was real." *Off the Wall* launched four singles into the *Billboard* Top 10 and eventually sold 20 million copies. That made it a giant of its day; it would be a midget next to the album that followed.

Even in his 20s, Jackson's ambition was as hard as his voice was soft. Privately he never hid his desire to become the biggest force in entertainment, and when he and Jones regrouped to begin work on *Thriller* in 1982, Jackson had every intention of making a career-defining colossus. The amazing thing is that he made such a lovable one.

Jackson and Jones sifted through more than 700 songs by the best professional songwriters in a quest to find nine perfect tracks. "We turned that album upside down," says Jones, and arguments over material were common. Jackson loved the iconic bass line for "Billie Jean"; Jones did not—score one for Jackson. But gradually the two felt confident that they had a record that was all hits and no filler, something the entire world would love—and purchase.

Put *Thriller* on right now and you'll be amazed at how easily the troubling last years of Jackson's life melt away. For Generation X the magic is partly nostalgic; everyone between the ages of 35 and 45 remembers exactly where they were when they heard "Beat It" for the first time. But as a piece of music, it remains the greatest pop album of all time. "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'" is the closest thing Jackson has to an overlooked song; not only does it open the album and set a frenetic pace, it also lays out Jackson's ambitious

FROM TOP: DAVE HOGAN—GETTY; GETTY; RON SACHS—GETTY; KAREN BLEIER—AFP/GETTY

musical agenda—from the disco beat to the rock timbre of the vocals to the closing refrain of "Mama-se, mama-sa, mama-coo-sa," cribbed from a hit by Cameroonian saxophonist Manu Dibango. Thumping and fraught, "Billie Jean" is a sound track to a late-night walk through a sketchy neighborhood. It actually makes Michael Jackson sound dangerous, which is no small feat. Jackson never got much credit for being a pioneer, but "Beat It," his melding of rock and R&B, preceded the collision of Run-D.M.C. and Aerosmith by four years. Besides featuring a guitar solo provided free of charge by Eddie Van Halen (in a move his accountant no doubt regrets), it's the best example of Jackson's ability to bridge moods and genres. It's tense and spooky. It rocks you while you dance to it. Like all of *Thriller*, it's a sophisticated joy.

On its way to becoming the best-selling album of all time (until it was eclipsed in 2000 by *The Eagles Greatest Hits, 1971-1975*), seven of *Thriller's* songs cracked the Top 10, and the record was immovable atop the *Billboard* chart for 37 straight consciousness-altering weeks. Consciousness-altering because Jackson was not just dominating the sound waves—he owned the world's airwaves too. After *The Wiz*, Jackson never had a major role in a Hollywood film. Didn't matter; in a way, he was too special a performer, too big a star, to be part of a director's vision. TV would be his multiplex, MTV his studio, in the minimovies that defined the genre. Sony Music boss Tommy Mottola, who tried to shepherd Jackson through the later, difficult years, is hardly exaggerating when he says, "There was nobody before Michael Jackson, and there will never be anybody after Michael Jackson, that can do for video what he did. It put the MTV culture into the forefront ... He totally defined the video age." In fact, it was Jackson's video that in effect forced the integration of MTV; until "Billie Jean," MTV was mostly lily-white and content to be so.

"Billie Jean," the first video off *Thriller*, snapped the neck of everyone who saw it. Based on an absurd real-life incident in which a woman accused Jackson of fathering *one* of her twins ("She says I am the one/ But the kid is not my son"), the song is a denial of paternity—a celebrity's cry of victimhood. But the video is a straight-on display of Jackson's star quality. Any pavement flagstone his feet land on glows a magical green. His moves are no less radiant. The spins, the strutting and hunching, show what Broadway missed out on when Michael decided to make pop music instead.

From "Billie Jean" to "Beat It" (both songs written by Jackson) was another leap forward, and up, with some dexterous star spins in every other direction. Jackson's first video connection to contemporary urban street life, it argues that, between fleeing and fighting, it's better to flee—dancing. The Michael character hears a rumble, dons his red jacket (the must-have fashion piece of 1984) and breaks up the battle by leading the gang members in a routine out of *West Side Story* but with starker, more staccato moves. A worldwide video as well as audio smash, "Beat It" helped send the MTV logo and format around the globe. For the next decade, if a performer wanted to promote a song, he or she had to make a minimovie to go with it.

Each succeeding *Thriller* video was more elaborate than the last, expanding in length and complexity. The title video ran nearly 14 min., with the song encased in a narrative that had Michael and his screen girlfriend (Ola Ray) watching a horror movie that comes to life—or rather, undeath. Surrounded in the woods by zombies, Michael becomes one of them, leading the creatures in choreography that would have exhausted any living being.

When it appeared Jackson could simply get no bigger, he divided his talent into 45 little parts and shared it. Inspired by Bob Geldof's Band Aid, Jackson and Lionel Richie co-wrote 1985's

Alex Kapranos
Musician
BILLIE JEAN
It's the best bass line ever written

Stevie Wonder
Musician
HUMAN NATURE
When I first heard it I was over at Quincy [Jones'] home and we danced to the music. It was magical

Nancy Reagan
Former First Lady
BEAT IT
I remember the day in 1984 when Michael came to the White House. A huge crowd had gathered to watch as my husband presented a presidential award to Michael for lending his influence and his popular song "Beat It" to a cause that was very dear to my own heart—the campaign against substance abuse among young people. Who knows how many lives were saved thanks to Michael's inspirational message?

FROM TOP: DAVE HOGAN—GETTY; RON SACHS—GETTY; KAREN BLEIER—AFP/GETTY

Bob Geldof
Musician-activist

DON'T STOP 'TIL YOU GET ENOUGH

He was brilliant, a brilliant artist and a fantastic dancer. I remember being at the Apollo in Harlem the night he unveiled the moonwalk. Amazing, on that hallowed ground, with the cream of black American music there, and he performed "Billie Jean" and did the moonwalk and it was gobsmackingly brilliant. The place just went wild

A.R. Rahman
Oscar-winning composer

MAN IN THE MIRROR

You look in the mirror and change yourself, and then the world will change. I love that thought

Jeanne White-Grinder
Mother of Ryan White

MAN IN THE MIRROR

Ryan just listened to it over and over again. It was the last song he listened to

"We Are the World," which raised millions for famine relief in Africa and, on the night of the American Music Awards, brought together almost every major pop singer in America in a Los Angeles recording studio. Parts of "We Are the World" have aged poorly (the whole thing went from idea to recording in just 12 hours), but the composition itself is a wonder—flexible enough to deliver a serious message and accommodate the vocal styles of everyone from Kenny Rogers to Bob Dylan. And when Jackson sings the bridge, it's a classic, "'scuse me, genius coming through" moment. His style—so clear and urgent—tops them all.

Any groundbreaking performer in the rock era is lucky to have a few transcendent summers. The magic amalgam of a star's creativity and an audience's rapture can evaporate after two years with, say, an Army induction (Elvis) or after four with a motorcycle accident (Dylan). Sometimes, just turning 25 will do it (Brian Wilson). Madonna lasted longer because she was the Mistress of Makeover. Most find it hard to maintain either popularity or emotional equilibrium. And the brighter they burn, the faster they burn out.

Jackson, as we know, hung around, adding notoriety to his fame and descending, to put it gently, into curio status. But even another two decades of steady hits would have been a decline from the fever pitch of *Thriller.* The album marked a moment in American history that few singers dream of, let alone achieve: the convergence of talent, material and production that finds universal acclaim. That's part of what makes Jackson's death so historic: he was one of the last singers—Paul McCartney is another—whose songs are literally known everywhere by everyone.

Thriller and "We Are the World" and his introduction of his signature step, the moonwalk, on the Motown 25th-anniversary show took Jackson to an unfathomable level of fame. Jackson was more than a crossover artist, but cross over he did. He was revered by kids black and white—authentic enough to please urban audiences and unthreatening enough to set suburban ones at ease. He was adopted as a cause by Nancy Reagan (they both liked red) but, despite "We Are the World," was shrewd enough to keep his politics to himself. Still, he showed a succession of African-American cultural figures how to transcend race—Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, Oprah Winfrey and, finally, Barack Obama. Michael was neither black nor white; he was sui generis, a brother from another planet.

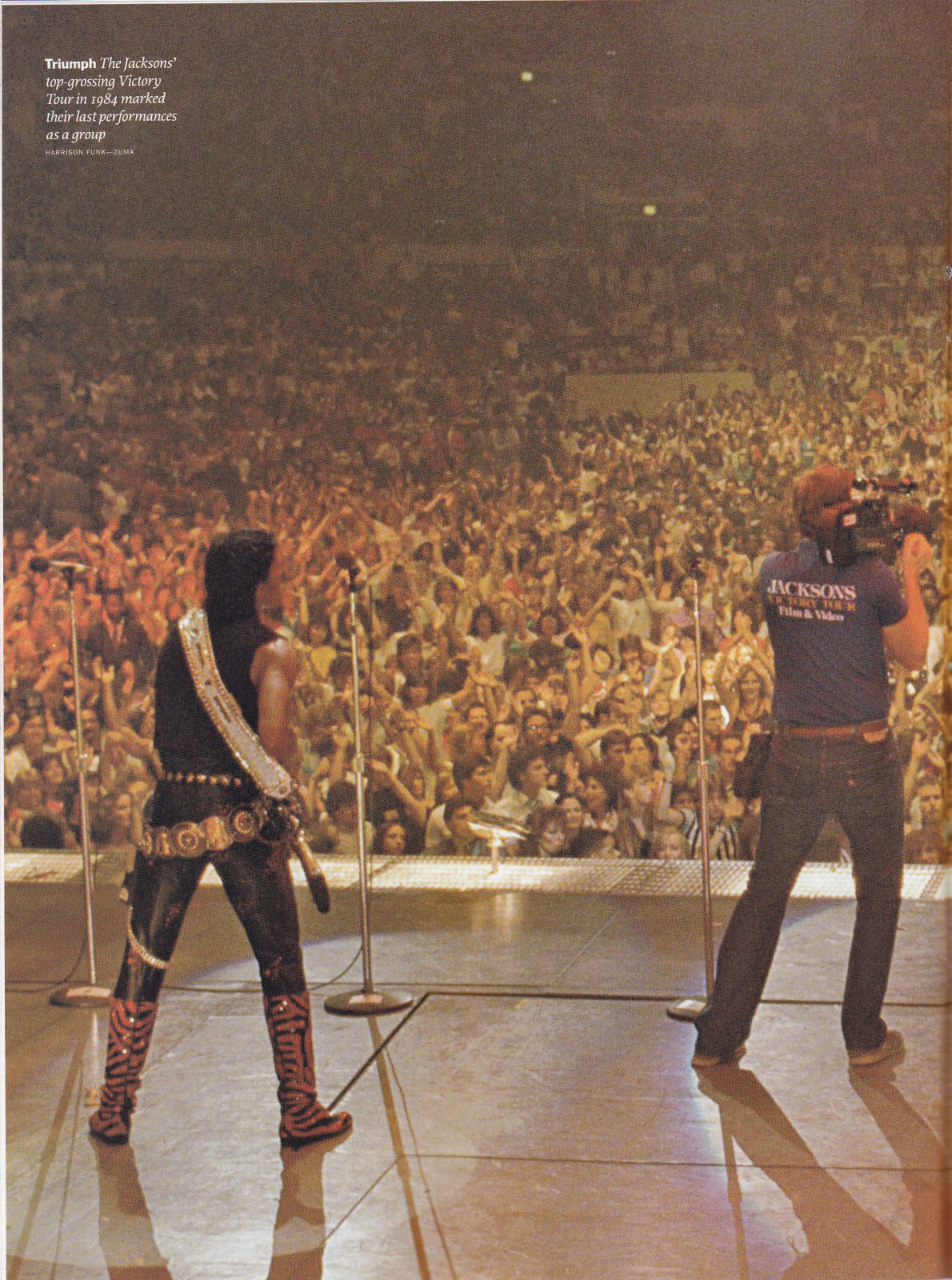
"We Are the World" *Jackson, shown with Diana Ross, co-wrote the song, which raised $50 million for charity*

Even as he cranked out another huge record—1987's *Bad,* still the only album in history to generate five No. 1 hits—he began to antagonize those who worshipped him. As he added a cleft to his chin and bleach to his face, as his cheekbones got higher and his nose keener, as he sat at a press conference next to Bubbles the chimp and hung out in public with Macaulay Culkin, the love and respect millions felt for Michael got more ... complicated. The kid was adorable. The young man was a thriller. The older man, who clung to a dangerously naive belief in childhood innocence, was in trouble.

And there we reach the cliff's edge. But before Michael Jackson toppled over it, he generated one final keeper, the toweringly indulgent but well-meaning "Man in the Mirror." It's one of Jackson's most powerful vocals and accessible social statements. It also contains a fleeting glimpse of autobiography ("I'm starting with the man in the mirror/ I'm asking him to change his ways.") But by then, we knew better than to confuse the singer with the song. ■

GELDOF: STEPHEN JAFFE—INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND/GETTY; RAHMAN: JEFF VESPA—WIREIMAGE; WHITE-GRINDER: TARO YAMASAKI—TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY; OPPOSITE PAGE: DAVE HOGAN—GETTY

Sold out *Jackson's* Bad *world tour grossed $125 million and broke two Guinness world records*

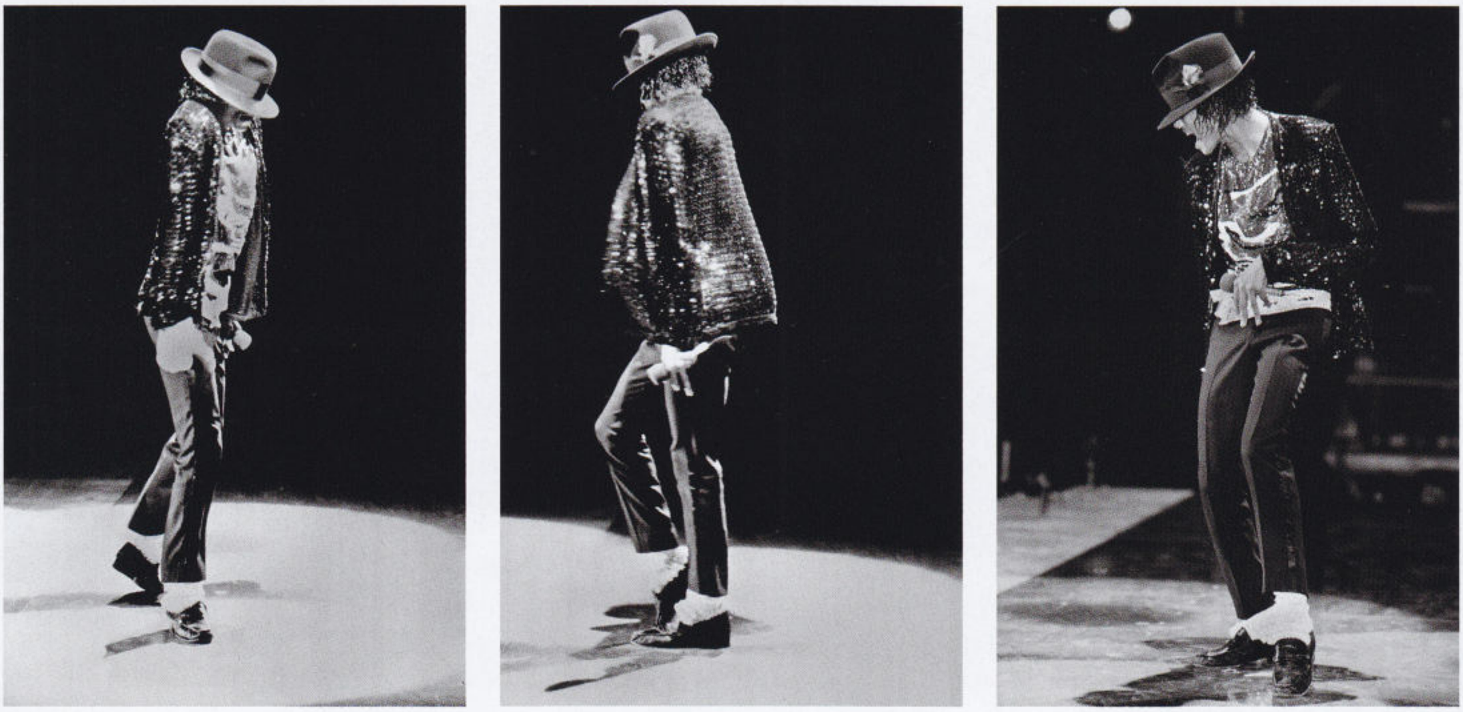

JACKSONS
VICTORY TOUR
Film & Video

Triumph *The Jacksons' top-grossing Victory Tour in 1984 marked their last performances as a group*

HARRISON FUNK—ZUMA

Peak form *Jackson relaxes in a New York hotel before a party in his honor in 1984, the year he won eight Grammys*

DAVID MCGOUGH—DMI/TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY



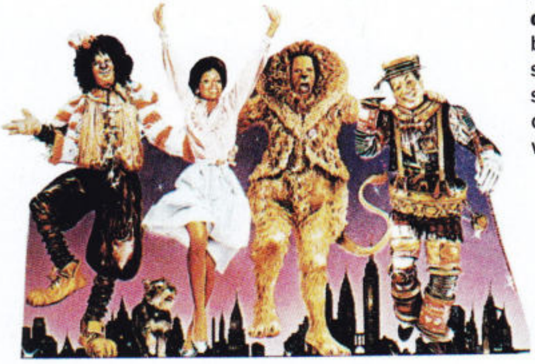
The Gloved One
Less than a year after debuting his moonwalk, Jackson glides across the stage during a Victory Tour show on New Year's Day in 1984

FROM LEFT: BEN WEAVER—CAMERA 5 (2); SAM EMERSON—POLARIS (2)

He's bad *Jackson's first solo world tour spanned 15 countries, 16 months and 123 performances. More than 4 million fans attended*

ALAN GRETH—AP

1978-1989



***The Wiz,* starring Jackson as the Scarecrow** and Diana Ross as Dorothy, opens in U.S. theaters. The film flops, but Jackson meets Quincy Jones on the set. The duo form a legendary partnership

Jackson breaks nose during dance routine: beginning of a string of plastic-surgery procedures, most of which he denies

Off the Wall was the first of three albums Jackson co-produced with Quincy Jones. It yielded **four Top 10 hits,** including the title track. A joyous effort, it jump-started Jackson's solo career

***OFF THE WALL* released: more than 20 million sold**

Jackson wins first Grammy, for Best R&B Male Vocal Performance on "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough," from *Off the Wall.* He was irked that the album didn't win too

Triumph, another Jackson-family album, goes platinum in a year

Jackson narrates and sings on the ***E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* storybook album.** It wins a Grammy, in 1984, for Best Recording for Children

Diana Ross releases a single, **"Muscles," written and produced by Jackson.** It peaks at No. 10

Thriller is No. 1 for a total of 37 weeks. Two of the nine tracks hit No. 1; seven make the Top 10. It was named "greatest album ever" in a recent MTV poll

***THRILLER* released: More than 104 million sold**

1978

1979

1980

1981

1982

1983

"Billie Jean," the second single from *Thriller,* moonwalks to No. 1. With vocals recorded in one amazing take, it remained on top for seven weeks

During an NBC special celebrating Motown's 25th anniversary, Jackson debuts the **moonwalk** and steals the show. The crowd shrieks after Jackson levitates across the stage during "Billie Jean." His outfit includes a single white glove studded with rhinestones

The music video for "Beat It" debuts on MTV, making Jackson the first African-American artist to have his work appear on the channel

By Sean Gregory. Reported by Andrea Dorfman and Mengly Taing

AP (4); BETTMANN/CORBIS; CORBIS (3); EVERETT (4); GETTY (4); LANDOV; MPTV (2); POLARIS; YOUTUBE

MTV first airs Jackson's 14-min. ***Thriller* mini-movie,** the most expensive music video of its time

Together with a cast of music royalty and '80s standouts (Sheila E.!), Jackson **records the single "We Are the World,"** co-written with Lionel Richie, to benefit the USA for Africa famine-relief charity. It sells 7 million copies

USA FOR AFRICA

Jackson piles up a record **eight Grammy Awards.** "Beat It" wins Record of the Year, while *Thriller* takes home best album

Jackson buys Britain's ATV Music, whose vast catalog includes the rights to more than 250 Beatles songs, for $47.5 million. Sony later pays $90 million for a 50% stake

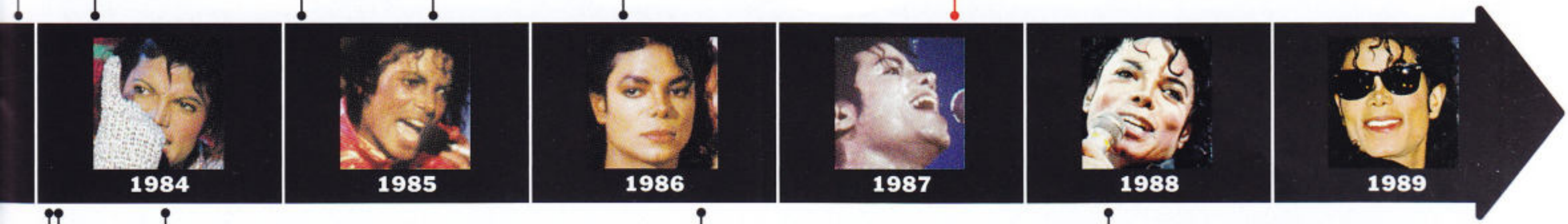
THE BEATLES

PEPSI

Re-signs Pepsi endorsement deal, for a whopping $15 million over three years

***BAD* released:** More than **32 million** sold

Bad goes multiplatinum and is still the only album to produce five No. 1 songs

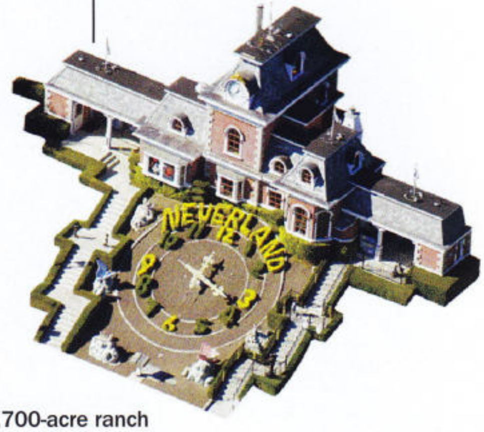


GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS

Guinness Book of World Records declares *Thriller* **best-selling solo album ever**

The Jacksons' Victory Tour kicks off at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Mo. It's the last time Michael will tour with his brothers

Captain EO, a 3-D film directed by Francis Ford Coppola that **stars Jackson in the title role,** opens at Disney's Epcot Center in Florida. It will play there until 1994



Jackson purchases a 2,700-acre ranch near Santa Ynez, Calif., for $17 million and **names it Neverland,** after the *Peter Pan* fantasyland. Jackson builds a kids' amusement park and shares his home with a herd of exotic pets, including pythons and tarantulas

Jackson suffers second- and third-degree burns when his **hair catches fire** while filming a Pepsi commercial in Los Angeles

Jacko
1990-2009

Changed man
Jackson testifies in a 2002 civil suit brought by a concert promoter

ERIC NEITZEL—POLARIS

Deformed by Surgery. Warped by Fame. The Sad End of an American Icon

By Richard Lacayo

WHEN WAS IT, EXACTLY, THAT Michael Jackson completed the transition from merely eccentric to faintly creepy? It began as far back as the mid-1980s, not long after *Thriller* made him a star of the magnitude of Elvis Presley or the Beatles. At first, his rumored oddities seemed harmless. Trying to buy the bones of the Elephant Man? Idiosyncratic maybe, but not sinister. Sleeping in an oxygen chamber? Unusual but, hey, superstardom has its prerogatives.

By the '90s, however, a more complicated transformation of Jackson's image was under way. In the last few months of his life, he could still sell hundreds of thousands of tickets for the long series of London concerts that he hoped would mark the start of a big, lucrative comeback. But the very fact that a comeback was in order was a sign of how much the once flourishing career had been undercut by the peculiarities of the man. When he was still in his 20s, Jackson's attachment to childhood pursuits—the amusement-park rides and Disney movies and ice cream carts—could still be borderline charming, the delayed preoccupations of a child star denied a real childhood. When the guy on the merry-go-round was 50, it started to look pathological. The wigs, the skin bleaches, the face masks and parasols, the plastic surgery more thorough than what you get in the witness-protection program, the suspicious dealings with young boys—in the final decade or so of his life, Jackson accomplished his last remarkable feat: he turned himself into such a spectacle, he almost made people forget the real phenomenon he was.

Maybe it began long ago. In *Moon Walk*, the memoir he published in 1988, Jackson told stories of physical abuse by his father Joe, the man who whipped his boys on to stardom as the Jackson 5. As Jackson said in a later interview, "He practiced us up with a belt in his hand." Before long, Jackson had two well-established and irreconcilable personas. There was the eternal boy so sensitive that his voice in any love song could end up on the verge of sobs. And there was the raging adult with his yelps and war whoops and his dance moves full of spring-loaded aggression. Like Mike Tyson, he had a child's high-pitched voice and the pent-up furies of a man. The original version of the video for his song "Black or White" included a long pantomime of rage in which, for four minutes, he smashed up a car, grabbed his crotch and carried out one of his angular, hip-jabbing dances in silence. He quickly thought better of it and had the segment cut—maybe because it said too much.

At the time, he was still indisputably a star, if an unusual one. Jackson's 1991 album, *Dangerous*, debuted at No. 1 with big pop anthems like "Heal the World" and jaunty, darting tracks like "Black or White"—a song that led a lot of people to notice that over time Jackson's skin had been getting significantly lighter. Eventually he explained that he suffered from vitiligo, a pigment disorder that causes discolored patches on dark skin. He claimed to be compensating with skin bleaches to turn himself a more uniform color.

But the real trouble started in 1993, when it emerged that Jackson was being investigated on suspicion of child molestation by Tom Sneddon, the district attorney of Santa Barbara County, California. Sneddon even ordered the police to photograph Jackson's genitals to see if they had the identifying marks of vitiligo that Jackson's accuser, age 13, claimed to have seen. But before Sneddon could bring criminal charges, the boy's father brought a civil suit against Jackson on behalf of his son. The investigation and lawsuit put all the question marks about Jackson on display—his over-the-top identification with children, his particular fascination with boy actors like Macaulay Culkin and Emmanuel Lewis, his habit of conducting sleepovers with "special friends," the absence of any known adult sexual relationship in his life, male or female. From the fastness of his Neverland ranch, Jackson issued to the public an anguished videotaped statement protesting his innocence, but he eventually settled the suit for a reported $20 million.

In September of the next year, prosecutors made a final decision not to file criminal charges, because the chief accuser was no longer willing to testify. Maybe it was just a coincidence, but by that time Jackson was married. In May he had quietly wedded Lisa Marie Presley. The daughter of Elvis Presley, Lisa Marie was a sort of kindred spirit, somebody who had seen up close the lethal burdens of fame on a scale few others could imagine. But the marriage lasted less than two years.

Through it all, Jackson kept recording, touring and selling. He was no longer racking up the massive sales of his peak years in the '80s, but then, what mere mortal could? In June 1995 he released the double album *HIStory: Past, Present and Future—Book I,* a greatest-hits collection that had an added disc with some angry new material. In the following year, Jackson entered a second marriage, this time with Debbie Rowe—a nurse in the office of his dermatologist—who was already pregnant. A few months later, she gave birth to Prince Michael I, and a year after that, to Paris Michael Katherine. In 1999 she and Jackson divorced. Jackson got custody of both children. Rowe got a multimillion-dollar settlement.

There was another child to come, Prince Michael II, born in 2002 to a still unnamed surrogate mother. For all the strange circumstances in which they grew up, Jackson's children have impressed people who have met them. A few years ago, the rock musician Lenny Kravitz got together with Jackson to record a track. "His children were there. I grew up in an old-school West Indian family where respect was paramount. And these kids were just like that, full of respect but not robotic. They both drew pictures for me and signed them."

Jackson's next album, *Invincible,* released in 2001, was a relative flop, going double platinum in the U.S. but costing a reported $30 million to produce. By that time, the world was teeming with boy bands and girl singers whose every move and yelp were borrowed from Jackson, but the King of Pop couldn't deliver his own lines anymore. He had too much backstory, which made it impossible for his voice to be plausible as the pure vessel of romantic need, devotion or—let's not even go there—desire. He was inducted the same year into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a solo artist. He was still the man who had electrified the world with *Thriller,* but people were starting to wonder if the thrill was gone.

Still, there were times when the old habits of hard work and professionalism shone through. J.C. Chasez, a member of 'N Sync who shared a stage with Jackson several times, remembers being backstage at a 9/11 benefit concert and listening in awe as Jackson rehearsed before his performance: "He was doing vocal drills for an hour before he went out—40 years old and the guy is warming up for an hour before every show. He wanted to give that audience the best he had."

Offstage, though, the stranger kind of performances just kept on coming. In 2003, Jackson appeared in a two-hour documentary with British journalist Martin Bashir. When Bashir asked him about taking boy visitors to Neverland for sleepovers, Jackson answered, "The most loving thing to do is to share your bed with someone, you know?" At one point in Bashir's film,

Jesse Jackson
Minister and activist
WE ARE THE WORLD
That, to me, was an autobiographical song. We are red, yellow, black, white. We live in a multiracial, multicultural world, so let's act that way

Peter Gabriel
Musician
THRILLER
Perfect and absolutely irresistible dance music

John Mayer
Singer-songwriter
P.Y.T. (PRETTY YOUNG THING)
I'm listening to it in my head. It's got tension and release, it goes loud, it goes quiet. It sort of makes a complete circle

Anjelica Huston
Actress and Jackson's co-star in Captain EO
THRILLER
It's the one I like to think of him singing, because it's him at his most fiery and strongest

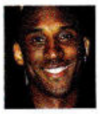
FROM TOP: MARIO ANZUONI—REUTERS; THOMAS COEX—AFP/GETTY; NOEL VASQUEZ—GETTY; DONATO SARDELLA—GETTY

Terrell Owens
NFL player, Buffalo Bills
BILLIE JEAN

When I was 10 or 11, I entered a Michael Jackson contest in my hometown and won. My mom made me glitter socks. I had the jacket, the glove, the leather pants, the everything

Berry Gordy Jr.
Motown Records founder
I WANT YOU BACK

It was just full of life, and it did everything that I wanted it to do to bring out the kid quality and personality and his image



Kobe Bryant
NBA player, L.A. Lakers

I think they're all timeless classics. It's literally impossible to pick a favorite

a 13-year-old cancer patient could be seen holding hands with Jackson. Soon that boy would be the accuser in a criminal case brought by the same district attorney who had investigated Jackson in '93. This time, Sneddon persuaded a grand jury to bring a felony indictment against the singer for child molestation, conspiracy and giving alcohol to a minor.

What followed, starting in February 2005, was a 14-week trial by jury and by media. Since cameras weren't allowed in the courtroom, E! Entertainment Television produced nightly staged re-enactments of the previous day's testimony. The prosecution brought out porn magazines seized from Jackson's house and called the boy to testify that Jackson had plied him with wine—Jackson allegedly called it "Jesus juice"—before making his moves. But it also called to the stand a parade of witnesses who had to admit they had lied in other proceedings or sold their stories to the tabloids. And it had to contend with an 80-minute video—produced by the Jackson camp—in which the boy's mother went on about how grateful she was for the time her son had spent with him. The jury found Jackson innocent on all counts.

Nevertheless, the trial had been an ordeal for him. And it offered the world another painful look at his strange, sad isolation. "He didn't trust people," says Thomas Mesereau, Jackson's lead attorney in the case. "He felt he'd been let down so often. And he would sometimes isolate himself because he felt that anyone that went near him wanted something. There was a side of him that just wished he could be an ordinary person and walk down the street."

After the trial, Jackson never again lived at Neverland. With his children, he decamped for almost a year to Bahrain at the invitation of the ruler's son, Sheik Abdulla bin Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, a friend of Jackson's brother Jermaine. He later sued Jackson in a British court, claiming the singer had reneged on a music contract and book deal. The suit was settled out of court last November, just before Jackson would have had to testify.

By then, Jackson's personal fortune was in steep decline. He lost control of Neverland when he defaulted on a $24.5 million loan. At his molestation trial, a forensic accountant, John Duross O'Bryan, testified that in the early 2000s, Jackson each year spent up to $30 million more than he was earning. At the time of his death, he may have been as much as $500 million in debt.

Jackson stayed afloat by leveraging his two principal assets: Neverland and the Sony/ATV music catalog, with its 251 Beatles songs, among other treasures. In 2005 he borrowed $270 million from banks at interest rates that reached 20%. After Jackson fell behind on payments, he sold the debt to Fortress Investment Group, a New York City private-equity firm that threatened to call in the loan in December 2005 when Jackson seemed about to default. Sony came to the rescue, arranging for financing at just 6% in return for Jackson's agreement to give the company an option to buy half his stake in the Beatles catalog for about $250 million if he defaulted on those loans.

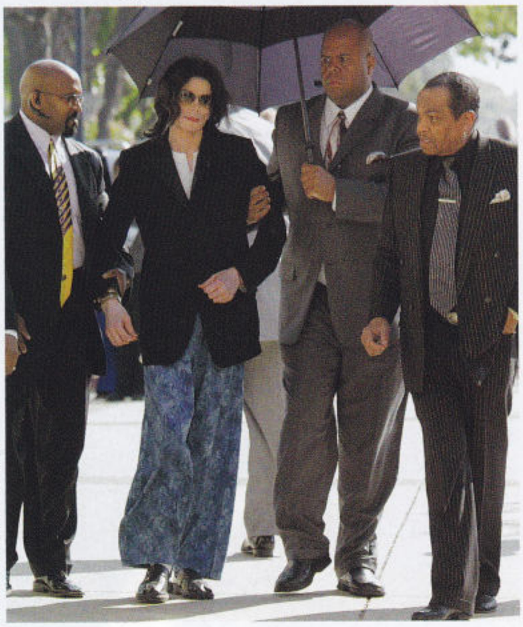
But Jackson wasn't finished. In March he announced his comeback plan, a series of concerts at the O_2 arena in London, backed by the concert promoter AEG Live, that were set to begin on July 13. When the initial demand for tickets was huge, he extended the run to 50 shows, which would have gone right into 2010. There was also the prospect of a years-long world tour that might bring in as much as $400 million. In the days just before he died, Jackson was in Los Angeles rehearsing for the London shows.

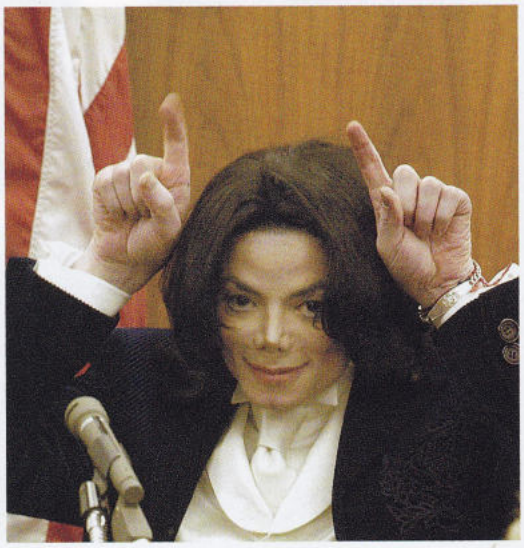
Even if he had succeeded in making it back to the top for a while, however, it would have always been difficult to imagine Jackson, the eternal child, in old age. It was hard not to picture him as ever more eccentric and secluded, like Howard Hughes, or Gloria Swanson in *Sunset Boulevard.* The Michael Jackson we prefer to keep in our memories is the man-child at the height of his phenomenal powers, the one with the saw-toothed yelps and the jackhammer moves, the one who flung thunderbolts from the stage. That's the man whom the future, which has a way of putting uncomfortable questions to the side, will take to its heart. ■

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: RICK DIELIA—CORBIS; KEVIN WINTER—GETTY; NOAH GRAHAM—GETTY; OPPOSITE PAGE: JUSTIN SULLIVAN—EPA/CORBIS

Nowhere to hide
The 2005 child-molestation trial ended in acquittal but not vindication

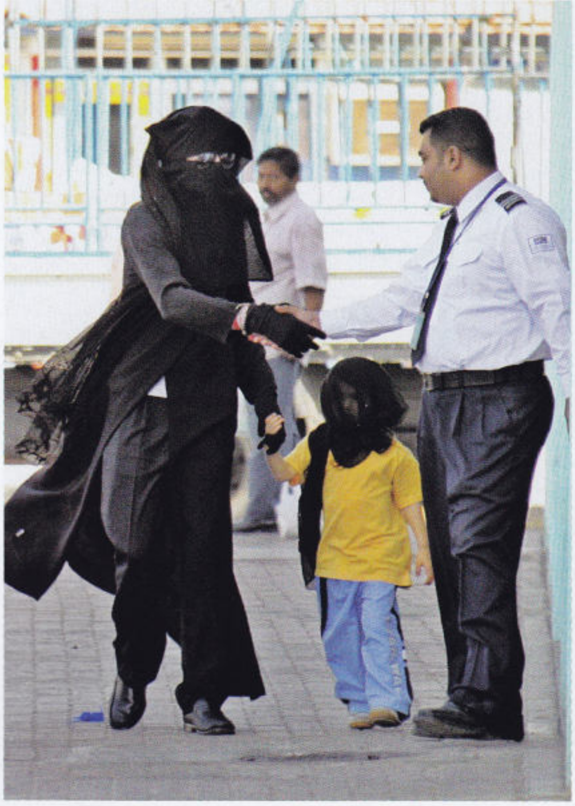
Trials by fire *Jackson arrives late to court to face molestation charges in 2005, below; right, he waves to fans after his arraignment; bottom, Jackson appears on the stand in a $21 million lawsuit filed against him in 2002 for failing to appear in two millennium concerts in 1999*



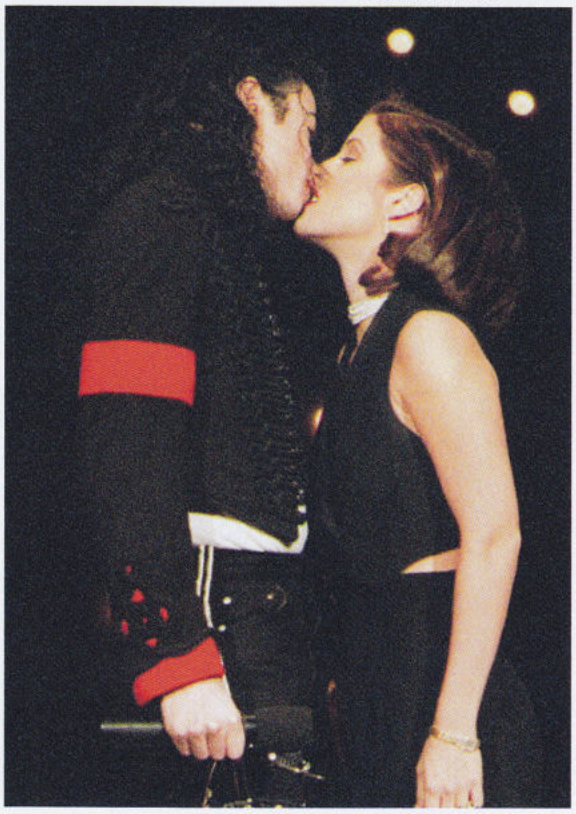


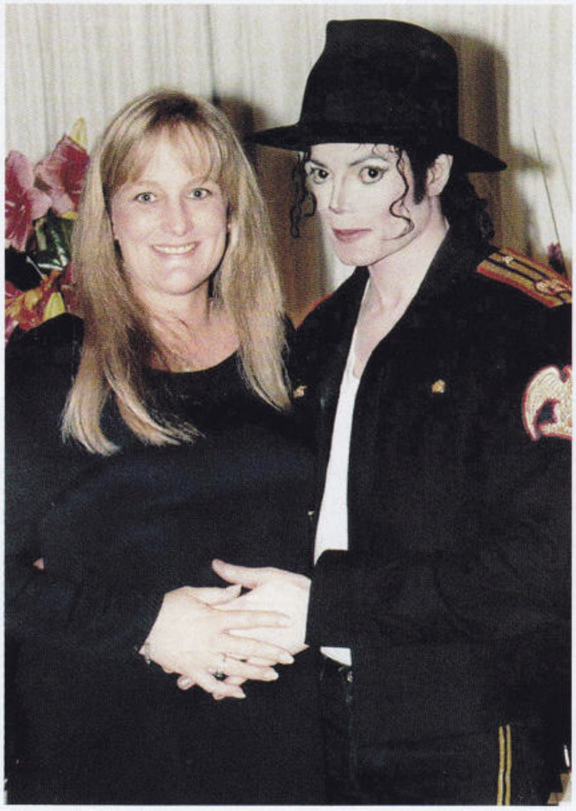
CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: ED SOUZA—SANTA MARIA TIMES/ZUMA PRESS; KIMBERLY WHITE—AP; ERIC NEITZEL—POLARIS

In disguise *In 2006, Jackson wears a woman's veil and gown in a Bahrain shopping mall*

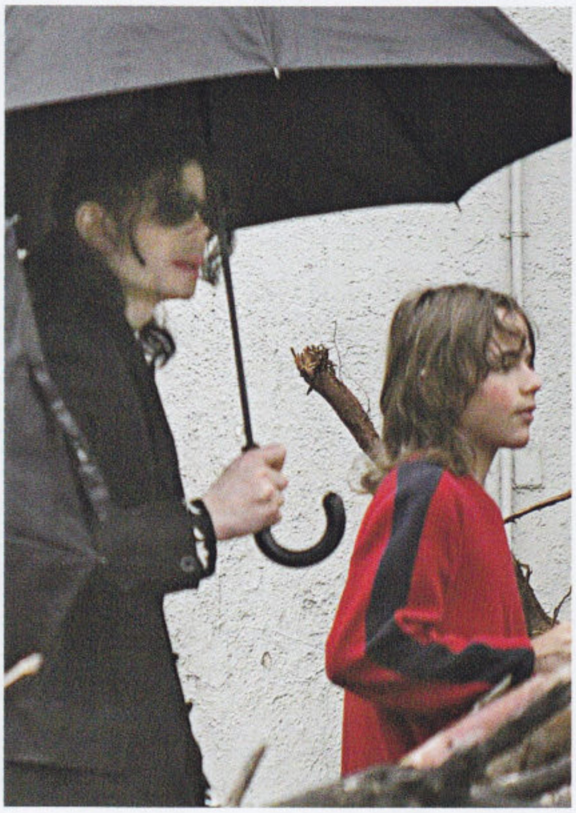


Love me tender *Newlyweds Jackson and Presley kiss onstage during the 1994 MTV Video Music Awards*



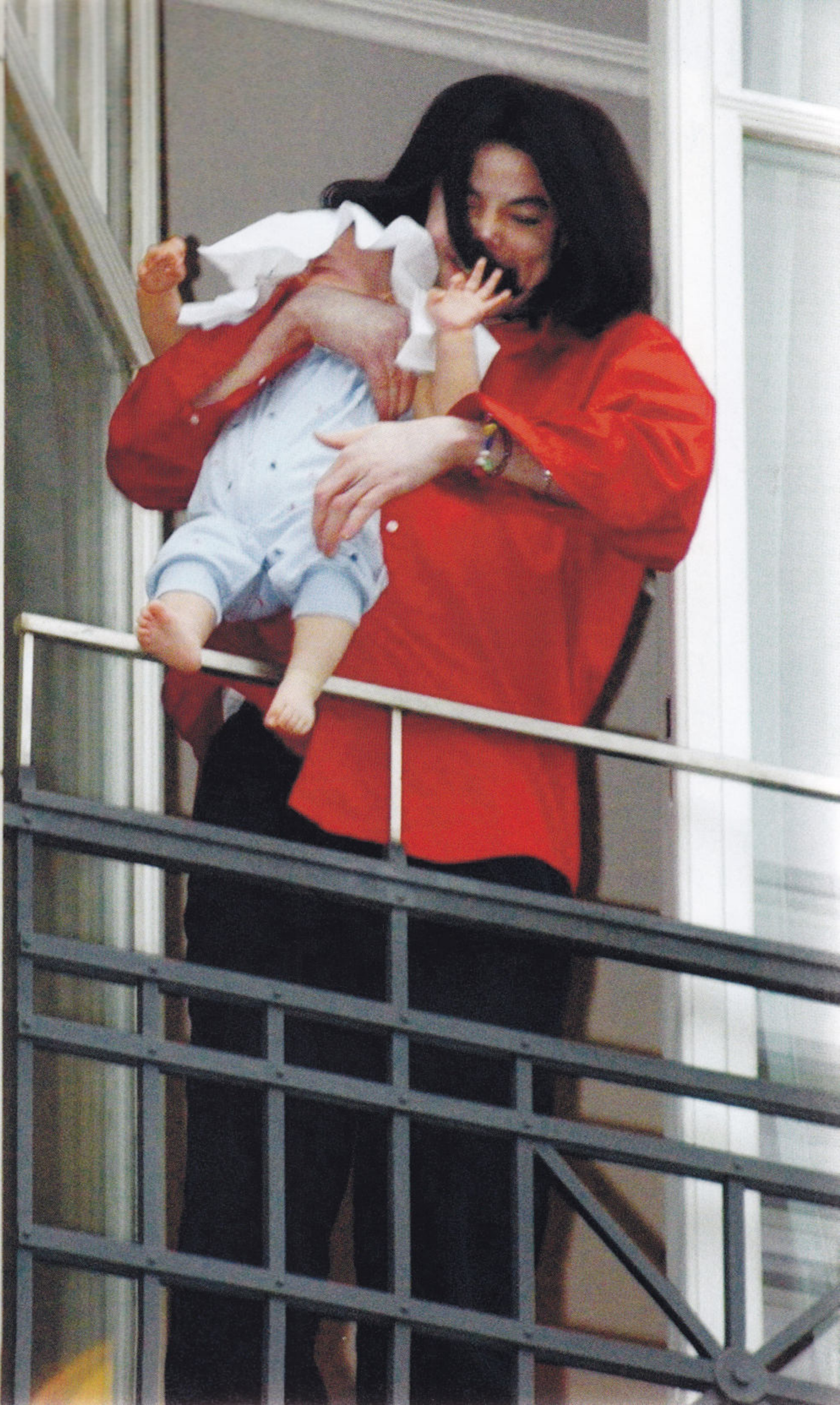


Finding a family *Jackson's 1996 marriage to Debbie Rowe lasted three years*



Father and son *Jackson takes a walk with his son Prince Michael, now 12, in Los Angeles*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: HAMAD MOHAMMED—REUTERS/CORBIS; AFP—GETTY; SPLASH NEWS; REUTERS—CORBIS; OPPOSITE: BZ—OLAF SELCHOW/EPA/CORBIS



Making waves
In 2002, Jackson holds his baby Prince Michael II, known as Blanket, over a fourth-floor hotel balcony in Berlin so fans can see him better

The reckoning
Though acquitted on all counts, Jackson retreated into Neverland after the 2005 trial

GWYNETH ROBERTS—POLARIS

1990-2009

Jackson **signs a record-setting $65 million contract with Sony.** The deal, for an MJ label, movies and six albums, is expected to generate $1 billion

Releases "Black or White" video in advance of his album *Dangerous.* The video is violent and sexually explicit. Controversy ensues

DANGEROUS
More than 30 million estimated sales

In an interview with Oprah Winfrey, Jackson **says his pale skin is caused by a pigment disorder,** not intentional bleaching

Marries Lisa Marie Presley, Elvis' only child, in a secret ceremony in the Dominican Republic. Citing irreconcilable differences, she files for divorce in January 1996

Hospitalized in New York City after collapsing during rehearsals for a cable-TV special

The Jackson 5 are inducted into **the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame**

Michael Joseph Jackson Jr., also known as **Prince Michael, is born**

1990
1991
1992
1993
1994
1995
1996
1997
1998
1999

Elizabeth Taylor marries husband No. 7, Larry Fortensky, at Neverland. **Jackson escorts her down the aisle**

Performs live at the Rose Bowl Stadium during the **Super Bowl halftime show**

Receives Grammy's **Legend award**

Live from Neverland Valley

The family of a young boy who had stayed at Neverland says Jackson molested him and files a lawsuit. Jackson cuts short his *Dangerous* world tour and offers a televised denial. The suit is settled out of court for a reported $20 million

HISTORY: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE—BOOK 1
20 million estimated sales

Marries Debbie Rowe, a nurse. Despite never living together, they have two children, but divorce in 1999. Rowe gives up her parental rights but later petitions to have them restored

Daughter **Paris Michael Katherine Jackson** is born

By Kate Pickert. Reported by Andrea Dorfman and Mengly Taing

AFP; AFP/GETTY; AP (5); CORBIS (7); EPA; GETTY (7); GLOBE PHOTOS; LANDOV; POLARIS; REDUX; RETNA; REUTERS; WIREIMAGE (2); ZUMA (2)

Jackson dangles his baby son Prince Michael II off a hotel balcony in Berlin as he greets fans gathered below

Invincible, Jackson's first all-new album in 10 years, **is released and panned. It would be his last**

INVINCIBLE

10 million estimated sales

Jackson is reportedly **unable to make a $70 million loan payment** to Bank of America

Charged with molesting a then 12-year-old cancer patient, Jackson pleads not guilty. Trial is set for January 2005

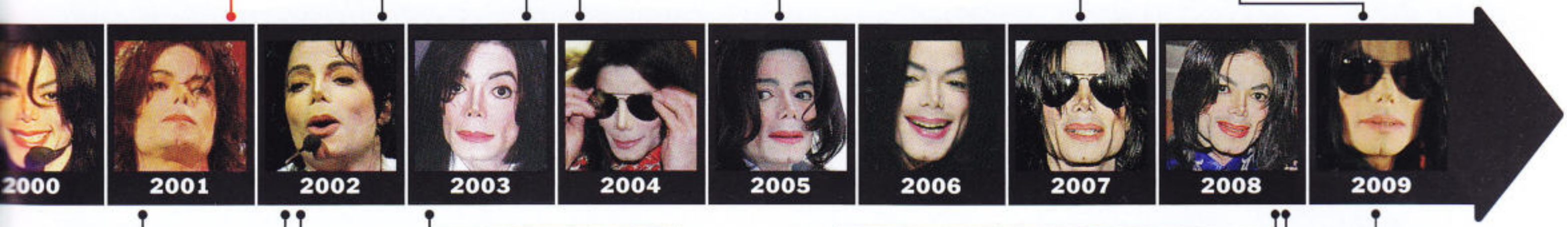
Stay Strong Michael

Jackson is **acquitted on all counts** in his child-molestation case. After the verdict, he drops out of sight, eventually turning up in Bahrain

Jackson and Sony/ATV Music Publishing spend an estimated $370 million on **Famous Music LLC,** a song catalog including hits by Duke Ellington and Shakira

Announces a series of concerts—**his "final curtain call"**—at London's O2 arena. Some 750,000 tickets sell out within hours

KING OF POP
MICHAE
JACKSO
THIS IS IT
MICHAELJACKSONLIVE


2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
2009

Jackson is **inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a solo artist**

Prince Michael Jackson II (a.k.a. "Blanket") is born to a surrogate mother whom Jackson says he never met and whose identity is never revealed

Jackson's former financial advisers **sue for $12 million in unpaid fees and expenses,** saying the singer is a "ticking financial time bomb." The dispute is settled out of court

Living with Michael Jackson
1 DISC SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION

In the TV documentary *Living with Michael Jackson,* the singer reveals that he **invited young boys to Neverland for sleepovers** and let them sleep in his bed. "It's not sexual. I tuck them in, have hot milk, give them cookies," he says

Neverland Valley

Facing foreclosure after defaulting on a $24.5 million loan, **Jackson loses control of Neverland**

A Bahraini royal who had hosted Jackson in the Arab emirate after his molestation trial **sues the singer for $7 million,** alleging breach of contract. The case is quickly settled out of court

June 25, 2009: dies in Los Angeles

Music
1971-2001

King of Pop *Jackson sold more than 750 million records, including* Thriller, *once the top-selling album of all time*

BEN
MICHAEL JACKSON
MUSIC & ME
Forever, Michael
Got To Be There
BAD
MICHAEL JACKSON
HISTORY
MICHAELJACKSON
INVINCIBLE
Thriller
OFF THE WALL

A 10-Album Catalog of Unforgettable Chart-Topping Hits, with a Few Autobiographical Glimpses

1972

Michael Jackson
Got To Be There

GOT TO BE THERE

When this old world gets you down/ When your spirit's on the ground/ Just remember I will always be around/ Just climb on the wings of my love/ I'll take you high on the wings of my love

"Wings of My Love"
Song by Alphonso Mizell, Berry Gordy, Christine Yarian, Deke Richards and Frederick Perren

1972

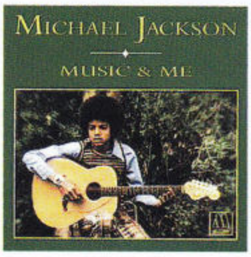
Michael Jackson
BEN

BEN

Ben, the two of us need look no more/ We both found what we were looking for/ With a friend to call my own, I'll never be alone/ And you, my friend, will see/ You've got a friend in me

"Ben"
Song by Don Black and Walter Scharf

1973



MUSIC & ME

We've been together for such a long time/ Now music, music and me/ Don't care whether all our songs rhyme/ Now music, music and me

"Music and Me"
Song by Don Fenceton, Jerry Marcellino, Mel Larson and Michael Cannon

1975

MICHAEL JACKSON
Forever, Michael

FOREVER, MICHAEL

But since the day I've been loving you/ I can't catch a cold, I can't catch the flu/ The sweet loving that you've been giving me/ Has become my daily need/ Just a little o' your love, every day/ That's all I need, that's all I need

"Just a Little Bit of You"
Song by Brian Holland and Eddie Holland

1979

MICHAEL JACKSON
OFF THE WALL

OFF THE WALL

So tonight, gotta leave that nine-to-five upon the shelf/ And just enjoy yourself/ Groove and let the madness in the music get to you/ Life ain't so bad at all, if you live it off the wall

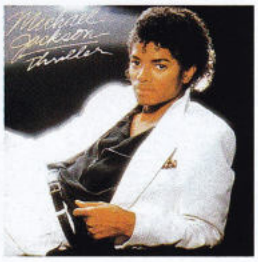
"Off the Wall"
Song by Rod Temperton

JONES: RANDY BROOKE—GETTY

Quincy Jones
Producer

I first met him when he was 12. Michael was my little brother. He had all kinds of magic. Michael was connected to that force. It's like a candle burns inside your soul. He was a very complicated person, but I don't know an artist who isn't. I haven't found one yet. A well-adjusted artist: that's oxymoronic

1982

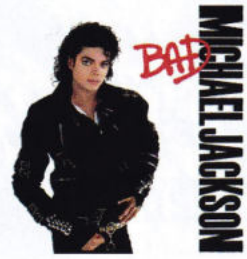


THRILLER

People always told me, be careful what you do/ And don't go around breaking young girls' hearts/ My mother always told me, be careful who you love/ Be careful what you do/ 'Cause the lie becomes the truth

"Billie Jean"
Song by Michael Jackson

1987

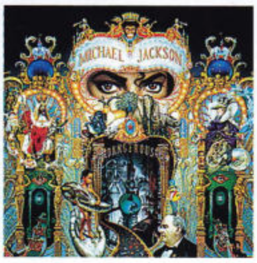


BAD

As I turn up the collar on/ My favorite winter coat/ This wind is blowin' my mind/ I see the kids in the street/ Without enough to eat/ Who am I to be blind/ Pretending not to see their needs?

"Man in the Mirror"
Song by Glen Ballard and Siedah Garrett

1991

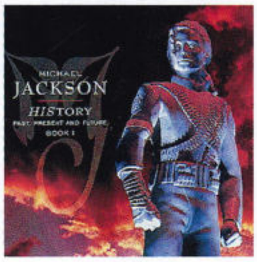


DANGEROUS

Born to amuse, to inspire, to delight/ Here one day/ Gone one night/ Like a sunset/ Dying with the rising of the moon/ Gone too soon

"Gone Too Soon"
Song by Alan Kohan and Larry Grossman

1995

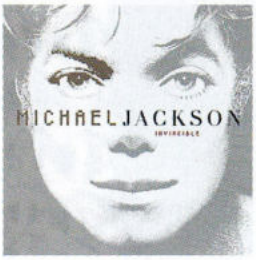


HISTORY

Tired of injustice/ Tired of the scheme/ Life is disgustin'/ So what does it mean/ You kickin' me down/ I got to get up/ As jacked as it sounds/ The whole system sucks

"Scream"
Song by James Harris III, Terry Lewis, Michael Jackson and Janet Jackson

2001



INVINCIBLE

Don't walk away/ See, I just can't find the right thing to say/ I tried but all my pain gets in the way/ Tell me what I have to do so you'll stay/ Should I get down on my knees and pray

"Don't Walk Away"
Song by Edward Riley, Richard Stites and Reed Vertelney

GABRIEL BOUYS—AFP/GETTY

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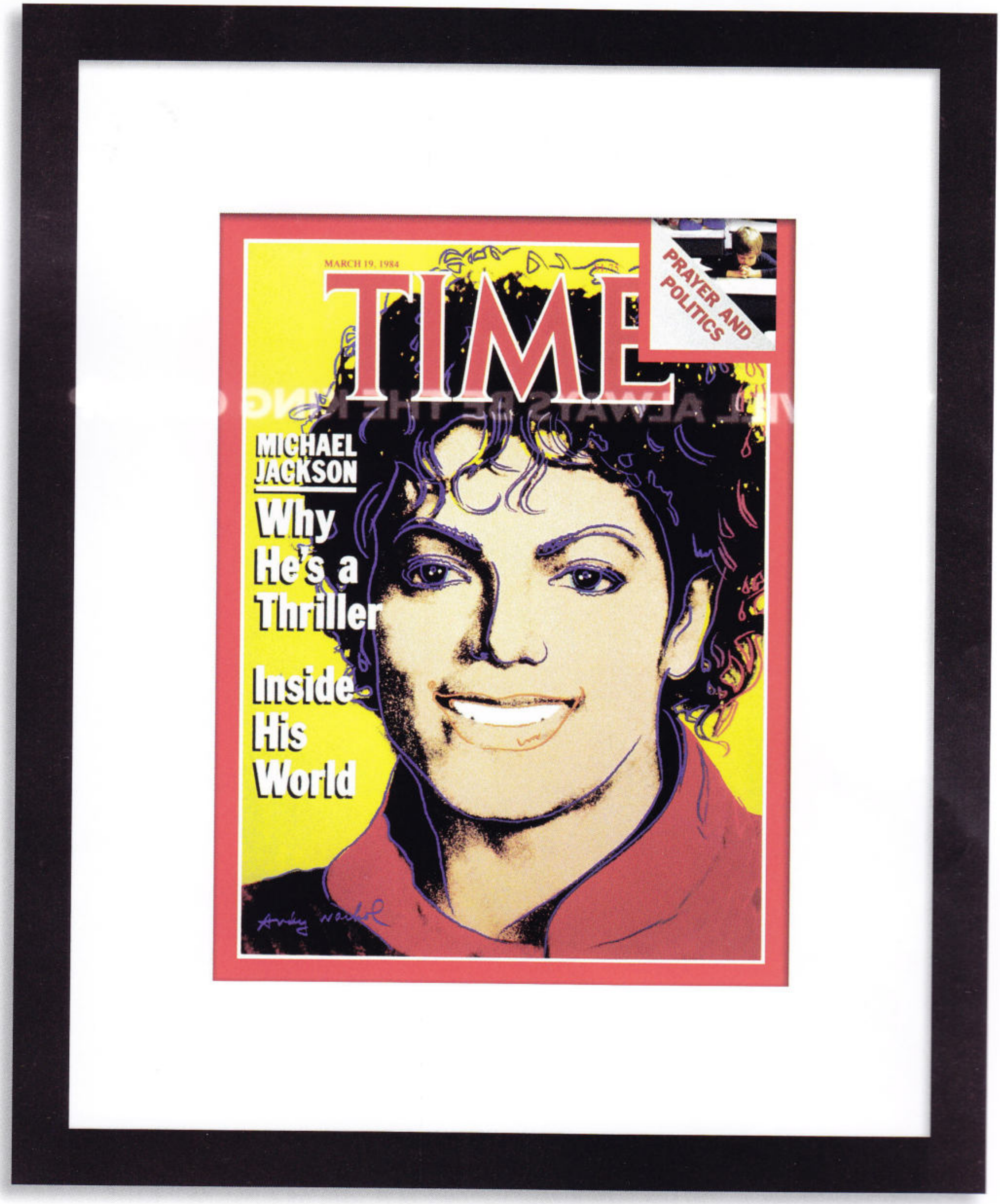
MARCH 19, 1984
TIME
PRAYER AND POLITICS
MICHAEL JACKSON
Why He's a Thriller
Inside His World
Andy Warhol

Superstar

Michael Jackson by Andy Warhol
1984

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YOU WILL ALWAYS BE THE KING OF POP

Thank you Michael

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